

Life and Death

Nightdancer87

Greek Mythology

Complete



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Summary

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Description:

Was it really abduction? And what happened to the rest of that pomegranate? My version of Hades and Persephone. Rated M for a reason.

1. Life Meets Death

Was it really abduction? And what happened to the rest of that pomegranate? My version of Hades and Persephone. Rated M for a reason.

I'm sure we all imagine Hades as we like, but in case anyone was wondering, I essentially based him off of Richard Armitage. But please, imagine him as you like. :)

Night was falling. Persephone had been waiting anxiously all day. She spent most of her time lost in daydreams, which was not strange to her mother, Demeter, who thought her daughter still a child. If only the goddess had any idea of what her daughter was really thinking about, she would have locked her away for the rest of eternity. But she could not know, nor did any other creature in existence know, though they soon would.

For months now, Persephone's beloved had been courting her, unknown to all, and mostly in her dreams. It was safest in dreams, for no one could spy upon them there, but it was only so fulfilling. After a while it was actually maddening, and eventually her suitor began to "visit" her in during waking hours.

Those visits were brief, for fear of being caught by the ever present and overbearing Demeter. So afraid was she that some god's or man's eyes might linger too long on her daughter that she was never far removed. It was safest for Persephone to wait for her mother to fall asleep and slip out into the night to rendezvous with her love. They played like children in the moonlight; he chasing her and she teasing him. The two of them rolling around in the flowers she had grown but a few hours earlier, tasting each other and learning the curves and contours of each other's bodies. They had never coupled; he would not take her until the time came to make her his. Until he was sure that she wanted to be his for all of the rest of the ages. He had known that she was his mate the moment he laid eyes on her in her father's palace on Olympus. He did not venture there often, tried to avoid it really, but found himself there on the fateful day that Demeter brought her daughter to see Olympus now that she had come of age.

Demeter of course did not see Persephone as being of age, she still treated and dressed her like a child. Short white chitons and flowers woven into her long, dark cascading waves were Persephone's daily adornments and what she was wearing that day she walked into her father's throne room.

He had locked eyes with her and she with him. He had half expected her to turn her nose up in disgust at him, as goddesses often did, or turn from him in fear of his dread title and reputation. But instead, she had been unable to tear her eyes from his. They were unlike any Persephone had ever seen, light blue like the shades he ruled over. He didn't look like any of his brethren; no golden locks or tanned Grecian skin. Instead, long black curls framed a pale face with a strong jaw covered in a short black beard.

Persephone had been staring so intently that she had not heard her father introduce her to him the first time.

“Persephone?” Zeus called her name a little louder and firmer this time, bringing her back to the present.

“This is your uncle, Lord Hades, ruler of the Underworld.” Zeus said and she bowed her head slightly.

Looking back up at him, she heard him speak her name, but it took her a moment to realize that he had spoken to her inside of her mind. His lips had never moved, but his eyes remained fixed on hers. The rich, baritone voice that had spoken to her mind sent shivers down her spine, and she responded to him by saying “My lord,” quietly and while Hades took it as a reply that she had heard him, no one else thought anything of her reverent greeting. For a second longer they regarded each other and then Zeus began to introduce Persephone to the other gods present and she had to turn her attention away from him.

Hades however did not turn his attention from her for as long as she remained in his presence. He had immediately thought her beautiful when she strode into the throne room behind her mother, but as all beautiful goddesses—or goddesses in general—found him and his realm to be equally undesirable, he was not moved to pursue her. Not until her eyes had found his on their own and held them of their own volition did his heart speed up and butterflies fill his stomach. He could not tear his eyes from hers, he was lost in those soft brown orbs that seemed to be beckoning him towards his destiny. Her voice when she spoke was like a siren song, and he felt himself being pulled towards her by some force far greater than his will, though that force matched his will for certain.

He had spoken her name to her mind out of impulse, he was not sure why he had so hastily made the decision. It easily could have frightened her or angered her even, the small but terrifying display of his power. But he wanted to greet her personally and intimately, wanted to communicate in the brief moment that he had with her what he had so instantly and overwhelmingly felt at the sight of her, and could think of no better or safer way. She had not been afraid, but rather acknowledged his overture, though unbeknownst to all others present, and spoke back to him volumes with her eyes.

Her lack of fear and obvious intrigue with him was enough to give Hades hope, and he vowed to see the goddess again, though far from Olympus next time.

And so their regular encounters began. First he came to her in dreams. Then, when that was not enough for them any longer, they met under the stars when all others who would seek to keep them apart would be none the wiser. The young goddess of springtime and flowers had made the lord of the dead feel like child again. Lighthearted and free spirited were not feelings that Hades had ever really felt though. But when he was with her, he knew only happiness and freedom. Her touch melted away centuries of pain and loneliness. Her acceptance and reverence of him made him feel whole and at peace for the first time in his long, immortal existence. But when they had to part, it was almost worse than before he had known her at all. Their separation was like missing an extremity, and he did not know how much longer he could bear the way things were. He wanted her to be his, in his realm, in his bed every night and by his side every day. He could no longer face eternity with any other option. He had to have her, but he had to give her time. She was young and innocent. She had

grown up happily in open fields, loved by her mother and protected from real life, pain, and sorrow. Could she leave behind the warm sun and her flowers? All her creations? Her mother's love and constant care? To love and care for him for the rest of her long life?

He had to let her come to the decision herself. But waiting for her was killing him. The only thing worse than not having her he believed was having her and not being able to keep her happy. For her to miss her mother and home so much that she would leave him. That she might fall out of love with him. He believed she loved him, but it was easier to love him at night and live happily and freely with her mother and her flowers during the day. Hades often thought that her loving him was too good to be true, and was some passing fancy that would whither with time, leaving him lonelier than ever he had been before.

As he lay in his great bed, restless with these thoughts of his beloved and trying to sleep, his eyes snapped open at the sudden and distant sound of her voice.

2. Decisions

Thank you for the feedback! I really appreciate it as I have been considering publishing this story for a long time now. Things will get much saucier in the next chapter, so if overt displays and descriptions of intimacy make you uncomfortable, you have been warned.

Persephone had crept away from her sleeping mother and ran out into fields of Nysa. Sitting down on her knees, she placed her hand on the soft grass and pressed at the ground firmly. “Hades,” she said so quietly it was just above a whisper.

She waited, thinking that she may have heard a soft rumbling but couldn’t be sure if her mind was playing tricks on her or not. Again, she pressed her hand into the earth and ran it through the soft blades of grass, calling a little louder “Hades, my love...”

This time, the rumbling beneath her was louder and unmistakable. He could hear her and he was listening. The aching in her body and her heart that was ever present became suddenly overwhelming, and she laid her body out flat on the ground, pressing into the grass to be closer to him, though he was far beneath her. She sighed and closed her eyes, “Hades,” she whispered with her voice cracking from emotion, clutching blades of grass as her hands balled into fists.

“Persephone,” answered a loud baritone voice. It startled her, eyes flinging open and raising on her hands to see powerful calves and sandaled feet standing but a little ways in front of her. Gasping as she looked skywards to the towering frame of the lord of the dead, she came to sit on her knees, in reverence and awe of the dark Lord Hades. His face was largely shrouded in the moonlight, but she saw the blue eyes shining in the dark like an animal, set in the strong, harsh face that was framed with soot black cascading waves.

While still on her knees, she bowed her head to him, “My lord Hades.” She paid her respects to him and his terrible title, even after all that had transpired between them. As she raised her head it was to see him but a breath away, lifting her by the waist to her feet and into his arms. Her arms flew to his neck, clutching him as though her life depended on it and pressed her body into his. His right arm locked around her waist holding her to him and the left stroked her back passionately.

“My love,” he said as he brought his lips down to capture hers. Persephone moaned into his mouth and buried a hand in his hair and stroking his chest with the other. She allowed his tongue to invade and explore her mouth and then returned the gesture. They stood so entwined for some time before Hades pulled back and rested his forehead on hers. Stroking her hair and holding her close with the other hand, he stared down into her soft brown eyes with his shining blue ones.

Persephone was short of breath from their embrace, and she looked back up into his eyes with her own half closed and veiled with lust and longing. Hades recognized that look, and knew that his own eyes shone the same. It was Persephone that finally broke the silence.

“My love, how much longer? I cannot bear this existence...” her voice threatened to break and he brought both hands to grasp her closer to him.

“What would you have me do, my dear? Tell me what it is that you want.” His deep voice soothed her and excited her at once.

She tilted her head up and looked squarely in his eyes, so that he would know she meant the words that she was about to speak. “To never be parted from you again, whatever that means.”

Hades was struck by the intense sincerity in her eyes. He had been waiting, wanting for her to say that for months, but had never dared believe that she would say it. He had hoped, but not allowed himself to hope against hope, to protect himself more than anything. But now, she practically pleaded for the thing that he wanted even more than she, and only needed to be fully convinced she meant it before he would fulfill her request.

“You cannot know what you ask my dear. You would have to give up everything you know, everything you have ever had and loved.” He said sadly as he stroked her face gently.

Persephone drew back from him, her hands on his upper arms. “You are all that I love and all that I want. Nothing is as beautiful or wondrous as before I met you.”

Her eyes began to well with tears, and she withdrew from his embrace completely. Hades let her go, only to let her finish what she wanted to say.

She turned her back to him to walk a short distance. “Flowers are no longer as beautiful to me, the sunrises and sunsets, the thought of eternity....nothing is beautiful, nothing is even bearable without you anymore.”

She walked in a little circle, now looking up at the stars. “Nothing is the same now that I know you.”

She turned suddenly to stare at him, he unmoved and watching her intently. “How am I supposed to go on living as I always have, pretending that everything is fine? That I am happy? When I am not fine, and I am not happy?!” her voice was beginning to rise and sound desperate. Persephone feared deep down that she was just a nighttime lover to Hades, a pleasant distraction that he could entertain unbeknownst to all others and with no intentions of making her his wife. She had seen how the Olympians treated their lovers, their spouses even. How her father had treated her mother and how he regularly treated his wife. She believed Hades loved her, but wanted more than to be his lover, she wanted to be his wife.

Hades sighed, he had not meant to upset her. He wanted what she wanted, and much more desperately he was sure.

“Persephone—” he began but she cut him off.

“Do you enjoy this existence? This life we have made in dreams? Only to wake unsatisfied and unfulfilled every morning? I cannot live this way forever Hades—”

“Nor can I.” he cut her off now, striding towards her and taking her by the arms. Tears stained her face now and he cursed himself for causing them. She didn’t speak, only waited for him to continue.

“We never have to part Persephone, but you must be certain that it is what you want. There will be no turning back from what he must do, and you must convince me that this is truly what you desire.”

Hades tried to impress upon her the severity of the situation, he could think of nothing worse than making her his bride only to have her eventually turn from him. To long for the golden fields and warm Grecian sun she had spent her entire life enjoying, and of course the company of her mother.

Demeter. She was another matter entirely. She would never allow anyone to have Persephone, so he would simply have to take her, as long as that was what she herself wanted.

“There is nothing I desire more, you must know that Hades. What would you have me do to prove it?” she said searching his eyes.

He searched hers in turn, and knew that she meant what she said.

“You will be bound to me, and to my world. You will never be able to return to this one lest I allow it, which I must tell you I will be very disinclined towards. Your mother will not understand, and it is likely that you will be forced to say goodbye to her forever.”

He had considered leaving that last part out, but forced himself to say it as it was only right. She needed to know the full extent of what she was asking, lest it come back to haunt him later.

“I don’t care,” she shook her head, her eyes never leaving his. She reached up and placed her hands on either side of his face, “Please my love, make me yours.” She whispered that plea and it was all Hades needed. He had no more reservations or will to restrain himself.

He looked at her tenderly and said sweetly, “Then my love, I will be waiting for you to wake.”

Persephone did not understand, but before she could question him, he passed his hand gently over her eyes and she immediately fell into a deep, sound sleep. Her body went limp and he caught her, bringing a powerful arm under her knees to hold her bridal style against his body. As he bid the earth to open beneath him, he looked down at her face. Beautiful and fast asleep, he would make her his shortly. With that he began the journey back to his kingdom, and as the earth closed behind him, there was nothing and no one but the stars to see them go.

3. In the Underworld

Persephone woke from a deep and dreamless sleep. She did not open her eyes immediately, rather she let herself lay there and gain greater consciousness before opening her eyes. The bed beneath her was so comfortable, she did not want to rise. It did not feel like her own bed though. Persephone searched her memory for the most recent dream encounter with her beloved, but found her sleep was dreamless. Her body, which usually woke restlessly from the activities of her dreams, was rested and calm. She moved, bringing her hands over the lush sheets that she now knew were not her own. Her eyes flung open as she realized that she had no idea where she was. Startled and afraid, she shot up in bed and looked around, just as her last waking memories came flooding back to her.

The fields of Nysa. Hades. Kissing. Pleading. And then nothing.

She looked around the great, dark room. She was in an enormous bed, covered in black sheets and furs that made it look like a great black pool. Soft candlelight flickered from several parts of the room and a great fireplace sat opposite the bed. The dim and scattered light cast shadows everywhere. Before she could take in any more detail, a deep voice seized her attention.

“My love, you are awake I see.”

That voice. It was so deep and velvety that she felt it almost caressed her. She searched the room for its source and found it coming from the nearest corner. He came forth from the shadows, his features largely concealed by the darkness of the room. He circled the bed slowly, like a great predator circling its prey. Persephone sat still, watching him his every move. She must in the underworld, this must be his bed chamber. He had done as she asked, and now she was frightened.

Not of him. No, she was not sorry or regretful of what she had done. Only now she did not know what must happen, what being his would entail. Hades sensed her fear rolling off of her, and he felt anxiety of his own. Was she already regretting this? Did she really know what she had asked? He was so close to finally having her as his own, he did not know if he would have the will to hold himself back now were she to resist him. He silently prayed, though he knew not to whom, that she had not changed her mind.

“My lord,” she whispered. “I am in your realm?”

“You are in my bed, to be exact.” He replied. “Does this displease you?” he asked, his tone unreadable.

“No, no my love.” She said and smiled at him now, causing all his worries to instantly be forgotten.

She took a moment to look him over, his armor and sandals removed and only a short, black tunic covering his body now. She had never seen him with so little on, and she felt her thighs begin to quiver under the sheets in anticipation of what she hoped was shortly to come.

Hades had not moved to join her in bed, and Persephone wondered what he was up to. She could see that he held something in his hand, but was keeping it from view.

"My love, I must ask you once more, do you still feel as you said when we met last?" Hades asked, not looking at her.

Persephone sighed loudly. *This again*, she thought. "Oh Hades, how many times and in how many ways must I tell you?" she asked exasperated.

"There is but one way, and I will ask you no more." He said as he turned his back to her and walked towards the other end of the room at which sat the great fireplace, twice as tall as herself. She moved to swing both feet over the side of the bed and stand up, slowly moving towards him.

"As I said, you must bind yourself to my realm, to myself, if you are to be my bride." Hades said still not looking at her. She approached him slowly as he turned and brought the object in his hand into view. It was a ripe and delicious looking pomegranate. Persephone looked at him questioningly. Hades regarded her seriously for a moment and then brought it up in front of her.

"You must taste the fruit of the underworld, and in so doing, you can never leave."

"You mean, that no one will ever be able to take me from you?" she returned.

That she looked at it that way made him smile. "Yes, my love, so that no one, mortal or god, may ever part us."

Persephone smiled back to him as she approached to take the fruit. "And once I have tasted this?" she asked with a glint in her eyes.

She watched his eyes darken as soon as she spoke those words. The smile on his face was instantly replaced by something that she would have taken for anger had she not known him better.

"Then, I will truly and completely make you mine." He said in an ever deeper, huskier voice than usual.

Persephone quickly took the fruit from him and backed up, putting several paces between them. She smiled mischievously at him, and with her free hand, untied her chiton to let the fabric fall to the floor. Hades drew in a deep breath as he took in the sight of her naked body before him. Perfect smooth skin, tanned by the Grecian sun. Long dark waves of hair cascading over her shoulders to frame her face and full bosom. A flat stomach gave way to dark curls at the juncture of her hips and long legs ended with perfect little feet.

She watched him, his eyes sweeping over her, unashamedly, again like some great predator surveying its next meal. Hunger, more specifically lust, clouded his eyes and had his chest was rising and falling faster. Persephone backed towards the giant bed, never taking her eyes from him, and brought the pomegranate to her lips. She bit into it and began to eat, unsure of how much she had to consume. It was large and she wasn't hungry at all. But she wanted desperately to be in his arms, and apparently she had to do this first. She swallowed one bite and then another. After a moment, she felt a strange sensation in the pit of her stomach. It almost felt like a pulling sensation. She slowed and scrunched her face a bit at the feeling.

“It is natural,” she heard him say and continued to eat the juicy fruit.

Hades, not being able to restrain himself a second longer, pulled his tunic over his head in one swift motion and discarded it on the floor. Naked, fully aroused and approaching slowly, Persephone stopped chewing to stare at him. Her eyes lighted momentarily on his broad shoulders and bare chest, but were soon distracted by his manhood. It was massive, to match the rest of his stature, and she could not take her eyes from it. His arousal and his expression were more animal than man now and it both excited and frightened Persephone.

She swallowed in a big gulp of pomegranate, leaving roughly half of it uneaten. She backed up unconsciously and felt the back of her knees hit the bed. He was practically on top of her now and took the half eaten fruit from her hand. He captured her lips in a kiss, rough and insistent, which she returned as her arms went to his neck. He broke it off quickly however and pushed her onto the bed. She started to crawl backwards towards the headboard, but Hades grabbed her legs and brought her back so that her bottom was on the edge of the bed. Confused, but willing to let him lead, Persephone waited for further instruction from her love.

With one large hand Hades pushed Persephone onto her back and stepped in between her legs that he forced apart. He had considered many times how their first coupling should proceed. It would hurt her, naturally, and he did not want her to be afraid. He could sense that she was, and decided that due to his size and her comparative smallness that he had better prime her well before he entered her.

He also wanted to rack her body with intense and unimaginable pleasure. He could still taste a hint of pomegranate in his mouth from their kiss, and hit upon an idea.

Persephone was growing anxious and impatient on her back and in such an intimate position. “Hades?” she whispered and looked up at him. He let a hand glide up her thigh, over her stomach and up to her throat to hold it gently. Her eyelids fluttered at the feel of him on her skin which was screaming for his touch. He passed a thumb gently over her bottom lip and with his free hand brought the pomegranate up and squeezed it, letting drops of the juice fall into her mouth. Continuing to squeeze it, he brought it down over her breasts, her stomach where it pooled in her navel, and finally over her nether lips where he crushed it, expelling the greatest amount of the sweet liquid there.

Persephone gasped and tilted her head back at the sensation. Hades tossed what was left of the fruit to the floor and bent down to cover her mouth with his, probing and tasting. Harsh and greedy, he sucked at her lips and bit her gently. She matched his fervor and began to grab at his hair and claw at his back. She pressed her body up into his and reveled in the feel of their skin finally touching. Hades withdrew from her lips and kissed down her chin and neck, following the trail of juice he had spilled over her body.

The feel of his lips on her skin was almost too much, she could not still herself beneath him but writhed in pleasure. Hades kissed down to her full breasts, which he molded in his large, rough hands. A soft moan escaped her lips as his thumbs traced circles over her taut nipples. He watched her face as he teased them, her arousal only increasing his, assuming that was even possible at this point. Looking back to her bosom, he pushed her breasts together so that her nipples nearly touched. He brought his mouth down upon them to suck off the sweet juice, moving sideways from one nipple to the other, over and over again.

This action was met with the arching of her back and a loud, pleasure filled moan tearing from her throat. Hades smiled against her nipples. He had just begun.

He could have spent much longer teasing and pleasing her buds, but his need was growing so great and he wanted to bring her to pleasure before he took her. Moving further down her body to follow the red trail he'd made, he licked at her stomach and sucked at the juice that had collected in her navel, causing her to writhe and giggle under him as his tongue tickled her. Kissing further down her belly he came to stop at her opening, the smell of her mixed with the juice absolutely intoxicating. One hand remained on her belly which Persephone found made her hot for some reason. She was still now, only half believing that he meant to do what she suspected, frightened and exhilarated by the prospect.

She tried to steady her breathing as she waited, staring at the dark ceiling above her. The anticipation was killing her and she looked down to see him crouching between her open legs that were hanging off the bed. Her chest rose and fell rapidly and he looked back into her eyes. Slowly, a wide and almost evil smile spread over his face. Persephone trembled as she regarded him, and without warning he buried his face between her legs.

He did not go gently, but forced himself into her opening, his tongue darting out to taste and invade. His hands came up around her legs to hold them apart and place them over his shoulders. He sucked and licked, lapping up the pomegranate juice along with her own. Persephone had thrown herself back into the bed, head tilting back, eyes shut, and was practically screaming with pleasure she had never imagined existed. Her hips bucked and brought his face deeper into her. Her hands balled into fists that clenched the sheets as hard as she could. Each lick, bite and suck from Hades was more intense than the last, and Persephone felt her body take over, moving and bucking of its own accord.

Persephone felt vibrations of pleasure consuming her body. It was building to a point that she felt might break her somehow. She raised herself slightly to look at him, the sight of his face buried in between her thighs was so arousing that she could not look away, until the pleasure made her tremble so violently that she had not the strength to hold herself up and collapsed again onto the bed. As she felt her release coming, sharp moans began to fall rapidly from her lips and she found that should could not even control her voice anymore. Her cries seemed to spur Hades on and he quickened his pace. His tongue attacked her clit with supernatural speed now and Persephone's hands flew to the back of his head to press him deeper into her, though it wasn't possible that he could be. It was then it overtook her, a hot explosion that burst from her center and spread all over her, causing her to scream out his name into the darkness.

She had surged upwards when it came over her, her back arched violently and she nearly came off the bed from the powerful orgasm that ripped through her body. Collapsing onto her back, Persephone's eyes were closed and her breath shallow. Hades, who was anything but tired, crawled onto the bed to hover over his love's limp form.

He chuckled and stroked her face gently. "My love, I am not nearly done with you." He said and kissed her heatedly. Persephone regained some strength and backed up to the headboard as Hades crawled up her body to hover over her once more. He slipped a finger into her, making sure she was still nice and wet, and stretched her a bit. He felt her tense up a little and saw her face scrunch. He inserted a second thick finger and she whimpered, digging

her heels into the bed and trying to draw back from his touch. He placed a hand on her face to soothe her.

“Shhhhhh, my love.” He whispered and withdrew his fingers to stroke her clit again. Persephone gasped and moved her hips, her legs involuntarily drawing up and perfectly positioning herself for Hades to lower himself between her legs. He smiled down at her and continued to stroke her, feeling her wetness and reveling in the pleasure he saw on her face, as her eyes closed and her head tilted back into the pillows.

“Hades.....” she moaned his name.

“Persephone,” Hades nearly growled in answer and brought his lips down on hers. Persephone surged upwards against him and buried her hands in his mane of black waves. Hades withdrew his fingers from her and brought his hands to rest on either side of her head. Breaking their kiss, he looked down into her eyes, and Persephone saw a tenderness shining through the lust.

“Forgive me love, it will only hurt this once.” He whispered and kissed her sweetly on the nose. He laced one hand in her own and pressed it into the bed next to her, and with the other one positioned himself at her entrance. Persephone, though afraid, wanted to show her love that she was ever willing to be his, and spread her legs as much as she could to accommodate him. She also shut her eyes for fear of what was coming, and lay waiting for him to take her. Hades regarded her for a moment, so beautiful, so perfect, and so willing to be his. He could restrain himself no longer, and moved forward gently parting her nether lips. He instantly felt her body constrict and her muscles tighten. Persephone fought herself, she wanted to be strong for her love and for herself. She wanted to be a finally be a woman, be a wife, and she wanted to please Hades.

Hades studied her face and saw the pain there, fighting it though she was. He continued to bury himself in her, trying to take it slow but his body was fighting him every step. He wanted to slam himself into her to the hilt only to withdraw and repeat until he exploded inside her. He commanded himself to be calm and slow, steadily inching deeper into her. The pain increased so much that Persephone could not force herself to be silent any longer. She felt as though she was tearing apart trying to accommodate his size. She cried out in pain and squeezed her eyes shut tight.

“Shhhh,” Hades stroked her face again and whispered sweet nothings into her ear as he began to slowly thrust in and out of her. Persephone’s breathing increased rapidly and she felt about to panic, the pain was searing inside of her and was not receding. She balled the bed sheets in her fists and her hips were pressing against Hades, trying to push him away and out of her. She barely knew what she was doing, she only wanted the pain to stop.

Hades saw that her writhing was not in pleasure and it made it difficult for him to proceed knowing he was causing so much pain. He pulled out of her until only his tip remained within her, and she exhaled a deep breath and relaxed a bit in relief. When she did not open her eyes, he called her name.

Her eyes snapped open to look up at him, sadness there. “I am sorry my love,” she barely whispered and Hades immediately took her face in his hands, shaking his head.

“No. I am sorry my sweet, for hurting you.” He answered, his eyes full of concern.

Persephone took another breath and steeled herself. "I am ready," she said.

Hades moved his hips forward again, pushing inside of her and instantly feeling her body constrict, followed by a pained cry. Hades withdrew from her, unable to see her like that. She was so tight, it seemed impossible. She felt like a perfect, velvet sheath around him. She felt even better than he had imagined she would. She was also in excruciating pain. He needed to take her fully and let her heal before she would no longer know pain in their coupling. But how could he force her to feel such pain in the meantime?

Persephone let a tear slip down her face. "I am sorry Hades," she whimpered looking very disappointed with herself. She shivered and tried to bring the covers around her, when Hades had an idea.

"My love, you are cold?" he asked, smiling a little at the thought he had.

"Yes....yes I have never been so cold." She said, not meeting his eyes, still feeling very put out with herself.

"Come then, I want to show you something you will like very much." Hades said and climbed off the bed.

4. Consummation

Again, I want to thank everyone for the kind feedback and support! I will try to continue and update every two or three days, but I currently envision this as being about 15 or so chapters with the plot I have laid out for our two love birds. :) I may do a couple of one shots with the two to explore darker interpretations of the myth at some point, but this piece is intended to be light hearted and have a happy ending.

Please read, review and enjoy!

“Come then, I want to show you something you will like very much.” Hades said and climbed off the bed.

Persephone thought this was very strange; where were they going? And why? They had just attempted to make love and she had failed him, and instead of being upset he wanted to show her something? Persephone sat up and simply watched him. He did not seem upset with her. He brought a robe around himself and brought another to her and threw it about her shoulders. It engulfed her as it was made for him, and she drew the dark and heavy wool around her cold and aching body.

“Come my love,” he said sweetly and took her by the hand, drawing her off the bed and leading her from the bed chamber. She followed Hades down dark hallways, dimly lit and winding through his palace which she knew must be vast. She had no sense of direction as to where they were or where they were going, she only followed obediently, relieved that her love did not seem angry or disappointed with her. The intense cold of the underworld also made it hard to focus on anything else. She shivered under the robe and drew it closer around her, the cold making her body ache even more.

They came to a stairway that they descended, deeper into the palace, rather beneath the palace it seemed. What lay beneath the underworld? She could not imagine. What she did know for sure was that it was getting warmer the further they went. She began to feel more comfortable and a little less anxious. She focused on how perfectly her hand fit into his. His large hand that held hers firmly, almost possessively. Perhaps his possessiveness of her should have frightened her, or at least be distasteful to her, but she loved it. All she wanted was to be his, and when he had tried to make it so her body rejected him. That thought brought her heart down to the pit of her stomach, and she choked back a tear. Just then however, they reached the end of the steps and she could see steam coming from just around the corner.

Hades turned and looked at her with a glint in his eyes as he pulled her around the corner. Persephone looked past him and saw the steam was rising off of pools of water. It was so warm that she wanted to shed the robe at once. And the water looked so inviting...

“The water is warmed by the fire that lies deep within the earth. I come here sometimes when I want relief from the burdens of ruling, or, at least recently, when I was *frustrated*.” Hades said looking to her to gauge her reaction. She did not miss the meaning of frustrated and blushed a little at that. Her eyes had widened in wonder and eagerness at the warm pools that lay before them and she wanted very much to sink into one.

“Come,” he said as he united his robe to let it fall to the ground around him. Stepping into the water first, he turned and stretched out his hand for Persephone to join him. Persephone shed her robe as well and took his hand to step into the hot water. She did so slowly, closing her eyes in pleasure as she did, the warmth soothing her as the water enclosed around her. She continued until she was almost breast deep and into Hades’ waiting arms.

A wide smile spread across his face as he watched one spread over hers. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her body flush against his. His hands rubbed her back and held her tight. His purpose for bringing her here had been twofold. One, to warm her and two, to relax her and ease some of the pain that coupling was causing her. He brought his lips down upon hers and mated their tongues once more, letting his hands travel freely over her body while they kissed. Persephone moaned into his mouth and returned every ounce of his passion for her. She ran her hands down his hard sculpted chest and over his stomach, going so far as to brush his hardness that was growing under the water. She tensed a bit, knowing that he would soon make to enter her again. She forced her body to relax, which the hot water made easier now.

Hades let his hands dip below the water to grasp her bottom. Persephone lifted her legs and wrapped them around his waist, which was fairly effortless in the water. She could feel him pressing against her belly, demanding entry. She breathed deeply, steeling herself once more. Hades brushed her hair back and looked deep into her eyes as he entered her, searching for any sign of pain. She looked back into his, and as his cock parted her she felt only a twinge of pain this time. As he filled her she noted a dull ache in her core, but the pleasure of his pulsing length filling her made her eyes rolled back in pleasure.

A broad and triumphant smile spread across Hades face. He withdrew from her and thrust back into her, Persephone gasping and tightening around him as he did, clutching at his back and locking her ankles behind him. This position brought her a little higher than him, and she rested her forehead on his, looking down into his eyes as he rocked his hips forward into hers. Persephone gasped and sunk her fingernails into his back. Hades took the visible lack of pain as license to thrust into her as hard as he pleased. He released himself from the promise he’d made to take her slowly and gently the first time, and instead mated with her smoothly and swiftly in the water. He pushed her back against edge of the pool, tilting her body upwards a bit and angling her hips perfectly. With every crash of his hips against hers Persephone cried out in pleasure. Hades brought one hand between them to play with her clit and felt her instantly shudder and tremble towards him. She moaned loudly and erratically, another orgasm about to rip through her body. Her toes curled under the water and she gripped his hair, arching her back as hard as she could, the rapid bobbing of her breasts only serving to stoke Hades’ lust.

As she came, Hades slammed into her as hard as could, feeling all animal and no man at all anymore. He came as she finished and her body went limp in his arms. He collapsed on top of her for a moment, still inside her, and caught his breath before withdrawing from her. He pulled her to him by her waist and she draped about his neck, laying against his chest and breathing heavily. Hades pressed tender kisses into her hair and rubbed her back. Persephone tilted her head up to him and pressed a chaste and sweet kiss onto his lips, smiling as she did so. He returned her loving smile and crushed her body against his.

“My sweet love, you are magnificent.” Hades said reverently.

Persephone blushed, if that were even possible now, and smiled up at him. “You are incredible, my love. I cannot believe such a feeling exists, it is like nothing I have ever imagined or felt before.” she answered.

Hades lightly stroked her back as she continued “But I do not understand why the mortals call such a thing a ‘wifely duty?’ It more a pleasure and a privilege I think...” she mused with a mischievous smile.

Hades’ eyes widened a little and he could not suppress a toothy grin. “Wife, your maidenhead is but a moment gone and you already sound so naughty.” He accused but with a devilish grin.

Persephone brought her arms from around his neck to glide down his chest and stomach, slowly and dragging her nails as she did. “*Husband*, would you rather I shy and shrink away from you?” she asked sarcastically.

Hades narrowed his eyes at her. “You had best never do so,” he replied and captured her lips in an ardent kiss. Persephone returned it, moaning into his mouth and sinking her nails into his cheeks under the water. She felt him clench them and noted he had powerful muscles even there. She brought her hands around to the front of his immensely powerful thighs and rubbed up and down them, carefully avoiding what lay between them. She wondered if he were ready again, knowing that she was but not sure if it was different for men. She heard a low rumble in Hades’ throat as her hands grazed two not so small orbs of flesh between her husband’s legs.

“And what are you doing?” he asked, his voice thick with lust again already.

“Just acquainting myself with the divine work of perfection that is my husband’s body....while I wait for him to take me again” she replied in a matter of fact tone.

Hades burned on the inside. What a little wanton she was going to turn out to be. She was likely to exceed his fantasies he thought, though that would require them to make love on practically every surface of his palace. They had eternity to accomplish that though.

Persephone heard a low rumble in her husband’s chest and his hands gripped her hips under the water. She smiled up at him and rubbed her hands up and down his rippled abdomen.

“Let’s back to bed, my love. I would that your delectable body was laid out before me in full view...” his baritone voice lower than usual.

“Delectable? Do you intend to devour me, my lord?” she asked, feigning an innocent smile.

Hades smirked down at her wickedly and leaned in for a kiss, but Persephone darted out of this grasp and was quickly out of the water. Snatching her robe up and hold around her naked body, she looked back over her shoulder at Hades. Giggling playfully, she turned and ran back the way they had come. Hades climbed out of the water, not bothering to grab his robe and gave chase to her, feeling younger and happier than he ever had.

5. Insecurities

“Savage! Thief! Rapist!”

The words became louder and louder in Hades head, until finally he was wrestled from a deep and satisfying sleep by the horrid accusations that rang against him in the back of his mind.

Demeter. *So, she has figured it out*, he thought as she pounded at the earth far above him, crying and shrieking her insults. He wondered how she had done so. Only a month had passed since he had claimed Persephone as his queen, and as he could think of no evidence they would have left behind, thought it might have taken longer for them to be found out. The earth sealed up seamlessly behind them, as it always did when he would return to his realm after visiting his beloved those many months. Perhaps the stars themselves had betrayed them. It mattered not. The truth would have come out eventually, especially if they brought another god into existence, as Persephone wanted so desperately to do. That was another matter that was troubling him. Turning his head ever so slightly to gaze at the happy sleeping goddess in the crook of his arm, Hades forced the screams of her mother to be silenced in his mind.

Still staring at his wife, he ran through the list of accusations that had just been leveled against him.

Savage. Yes, he had taken her savagely once or twice in the preceding evening, but Persephone had enjoyed it, even demanded it at one point. She was anything but afraid of him.

Thief. He had stolen nothing from anyone; Persephone had pleaded to be his and he simply did as she commanded, as he did in all things for he only wanted to please her. Luckily, what pleased her most usually pleased him as well, and so making her happy was easily accomplished.

Rapist. He almost laughed at the that one. First, because he would never dare take her unwillingly. And if he would, he had many opportunities to do so in the previous months. He did not need to take her back to his kingdom to do that. He had taken her because he wanted her to rule by his side. To be his consort, not his slave. Secondly, his wife's appetite matched his. And her shyness, what little there had been, was quickly cast off to surrender her body to him completely. They had tried every position they could think of and were steadily working their way through christening every inch of his realm with their love making activities. It was impossible for him to get enough of her, and as he gazed at her considered slipping inside of her and waking up her with an orgasm. She looked so peaceful and sated though, he decided to let her sleep. He would have her as soon as she woke however.

Laying back into the pillows, he pondered for the first time the possible repercussions of their actions. He would answer for them alone, though she might have wanted this as much as he, that would be harder to believe. Likely, certainly rather, the popular belief would be that of Demeter's. That he had abducted and raped the virginal goddess of spring. He, the dark,

menacing and sinister lord of the dead. No innocent and beautiful goddess like Persephone would willingly come to his bed, they would say.

Aside from all of that, Hades would insist on taking the blame because he could not let his love be punished. He could not bear it, and just as important she was his wife and it was his duty to protect her. He was not sure what consequences he thought would result from all this. Truthfully he had elected not to think of it at all and rather spend his time enjoying his bride, making up for months of lost time when they'd had to content themselves with kisses and chaste caresses. And with her eating the fruit of his realm and being bound to it, there was no spell or loophole he knew of that could take her from him.

He did know however, and all too well, that the fates were mysterious and cruel. Little if anything was certain, and if there was a way to divide them, Demeter was likely already turning the heavens upside down to find it out.

Hades unconsciously pulled Persephone closer at these thoughts. She hummed contentedly and nestled deeper into the space between his neck and shoulder. He ever so lightly kissed her forehead and closed his eyes against all those troublesome thoughts. When he opened his eyes again they went to rest on her flat stomach, the matter of a child resurfacing in his mind.

He had never given thought to having offspring. He had also never encountered another being that he would want to share offspring with. Persephone had changed everything of course, and he now found that he would take immense pleasure in impregnating her. To see her swell up and know that he was the cause. To have his perfect love be the mother of his children. Even then he did not want them as much as she did. For her part, prior to Hades, Persephone had never really entertained the idea of children, mostly because her mother had engrained in her from the beginning that she would remain a virgin goddess for her long, immortal life; devoting that long life to the fields, the harvest, and of course to her. But after she had fallen in love with Hades, she was almost obsessed with the want of his child. To have a perfect, miniature copy of her love. Truly, she would love any baby what was theirs, but she wanted very much for a boy. That she hadn't conceived yet was ever present in her mind. It wasn't as if they did anything but *try* to make a baby. But it had only been a month that she had been in the Underworld now, and she thought it very likely she could be pregnant and just not know it yet. That is what she hoped, anyway.

Hades traced his fingers lightly over the smooth, flat plane of her stomach and hoped he could give her what she wanted. If they in fact could not conceive, it would be his fault, not hers. She was goddess of spring, flowers, and thus life. Her lady mother was goddess of the harvest, symbolizing the fertility of the land and very often mortal women beseeched her in the matter of their own fertility. Persephone's womb was fertile, but Hades wondered if he had the ability to sow life in it. Had he been in the land of the dead too long? Was he sterile like the realm he governed? He feared it likely. He had had coupled with females here and there through the centuries to pass the time. He had never loved them, but he was a man and he could not pass the eons completely abstinent. But he had never fathered a child. That fact had never troubled him. Until now.

But it was very early in their eternity together, he assured himself. They had ages before them to conceive and raise children. Perhaps they would have many. If he were able, he would give her as many as she wanted. Even as he reassured himself, a fear crept into the back of his heart that he would be unable to fulfill this particular desire of his queen. What if,

if he could not give her children, she eventually left him for a god who could? He would never allow her to leave his realm, but he didn't have to in order for her to take a lover. There were plenty who would consider it a privilege to give her children he was sure. He had seen the way the other gods had looked at her that day in her father's throne room, when he himself first saw her. Apollo had eyed her great interest and Ares had looked ready to devour her. But she had not noticed, she had been too fixated on him.

He considered that for a moment, how fortunate he was to have her at all. How was it that where all others had only ever feared him or failed to find him desirable, she had been intrigued and desperately attracted from the moment they met? He had suffered much in his life, which had been tumultuous and painful from the very beginning. Perhaps she was the one comfort the fates allowed him. If so, he would gladly take her in favor of everything his brothers had times a thousand.

Hades laid his head back into the pillows and closed his eyes. He could feel Persephone's forehead resting on his cheek and her hand was laid over his heart. Fitting, he thought. It did belong to her after all. Sleep called to him once more, the accusing cries that had woken him far away and forgotten now as he embraced his beloved.

As you can see, Hades is feeling a bit insecure. But don't worry, Persephone is wholly devoted. Hades is just afraid of losing her, which we know he will, but will he get her back? And can he give her a baby? Please R&R and as always thank you so much for the wonderful comments and support!

6. Wedded Bliss

Another month of wedded bliss had passed and Persephone had been in the Underworld for almost two months now. She lay in the great, plush bed that she and her lord husband shared, sleeping later than she should but tired from spending the majority of the preceding night on the floor in front of the great fireplace. She so enjoyed it when he made love to her by the fire, as she still had not completely acclimated to the cold underworld after a lifetime under the warm Grecian sun.

Hades had left her an hour or two ago as there were more souls than usual to judge. Actually, there had been a steady rise in souls that passed into the realm, but Persephone assumed there were ebbs and flows to such things. Perhaps there was a war going on somewhere, someone was always fighting someone else it seemed. She did not think on it much. Judging was her husband's duty.

That being the case, Hades was having a throne constructed for her, so that she might sit by his side while he dispensed judgments when she desired to. He also said it was necessary for when they received visitors officially as king and queen for her to have a seat next to him. He had said it would look just like his, only smaller and a bit shorter. She had been very excited by that, to have a seat next to her lord's.

While she was a queen now, she did not yet feel like one. The first month she was in the Underworld, all she and Hades had done practically was couple. He had survived on very little sleep during that time, often spending his waking hours with her and when she was sleeping he would dispense judgments and tend to the kingdom. Only when the number of souls that passed over the Styx suddenly increased was he forced to spend time away from her.

He had, in the last month however, made the effort to show her something other than their bedroom. Every two or three days they would spend the day in a different part of his vast palace or out of doors surveying a different part of his realm. Persephone had much to learn about her new kingdom, and she had to be well acquainted with it before she could actually rule it. Hades was being very patient with her though, and promised her that eventually he would let her share in the judging of souls if it would please her. That made having a seat next to him all the more important, so she could observe and learn from her husband.

It did bother her a bit that she felt largely useless in her new home. Her talents and powers were obsolete in the land of the dead. Truly though, she knew, she had really been obsolete in the Upperworld as well. Her great lady mother did not need her to bring forth the harvests or cover the fields with flowers. She was a minor goddess, now betrothed to a mighty king and god. Elder of the three and ruler of what she thought was the greatest of their kingdoms. The dead far outnumbered the living, giving Hades the most subjects by far. All the wealth that was in the earth was his, as well as mean creatures that did only his bidding. She did not fear him though, never had.

As for looking the part of queen of the Underworld, Persephone was making faster progress at that. She had spent her entire life wearing short, white chitons with flowers as her

only adornments. Now, she wore long and magnificent gowns of black, grey, crimson, or dark blue. She did not wish to wear black all of the time as her husband did, but did enjoy how perfectly matched they appeared when she did. They appeared made for each other, she thought, and in her heart she believed that they were. Strange as everyone else would find that.

As for adornments, all the wealth in the earth belonged to Hades, and he lavished it upon his queen. Gold, rubies, hematite, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds, sardonyx, chalcedony, pearls, agate, garnets and opals were just some of the jewels in her ever growing collection. Little did Persephone know that Hades was having a crown to match his fashioned for her. It amused Hades and endeared her to him even more that it did not occur to Persephone to even want such things, much less ask for them. That made him want to shower gifts upon her even more.

She wondered for a moment what her mother would say about all of this. How her mother was dealing with her absence. Persephone loved her mother, and she knew that her mother loved her. She also knew that her mother would never have allowed her to marry or be devoted to anyone but her. She had many times wanted to tell her mother of Hades; how much she loved him and how happy he had made her. But she knew that she wouldn't understand. If anything, she would have tried to stop them from ever seeing each other again, and that fear had been enough to keep Persephone silent. Hades was like air to her. Her waking moments before she joined him in the Underworld were like a dream or some half-life; she only felt alive was when she was with him, under the stars and in his arms.

Persephone dismissed the troublesome thoughts of her mother and rose from bed. Stretching, she began to rake her fingers through her hair to detangle it from last night's love making activities. She walked to the chest that contained her wardrobe and began to look through it for something to wear. As she sorted through things, she heard the door to the antechamber open and heavy footfalls coming ever closer.

Her heart skipped a beat, even after knowing him all these months, he still had that effect on her. Bringing the garment in her hands up to cover herself as she held it to her body, she turned and waited for him to appear.

Hades' tall and imposing form appeared in the doorway, his eyes going to the bed first and then sweeping over the room for her.

"Looking for something, my lord?" Persephone asked and his head immediately turned towards her. Persephone noticed there was a black bundle in his right hand but said nothing. She only held onto the garment, feigning bashfulness and surprise at his sudden intrusion.

Hades took in her form and practically growled. He slowly advanced on her, a wicked smile playing on his lips.

"You're finally up I see. Though only just it appears." He said huskily.

"Well, someone did keep me up most of the night. And on the floor no less..." she spoke as though she was disapproving of it, but he knew better.

"How inconsiderate of them." Hades remarked, now only a few feet away. Persephone still clutched at the fabric, covering only her breasts and what lay between her thighs, making sure

every other bit of skin was visible that could be as she turned her body towards her approaching husband.

“What is that?” she asked of the black, velvety bundle in this right hand.

“Oh, this? Nothing really. Just a little offering to atone for keeping you up all night, my queen.” Hades baritone voice practically caressing her.

Persephone batted her eyelashes at him and waited for him to unveil it to her, though he had held it out for her to take. She would have had to drop her covering, and made no move to. Hades narrowed his eyes at her.

“Playing hard to get *now*, my love?” Hades asked skeptically.

“If I do not deny you just a tiny bit my dear, you will grow tired of me very soon, as much as we—”

“Impossible.” He cut her off. “But, if you insist love...” he continued and opened the bundle to hold up a magnificent necklace of glittering sapphires to drape around her neck. She gasped, lightly grazing her fingers over it as she looked down at it. Sapphires were her favorite.

“Do you like it?” he asked.

“Oh Hades, I love it. It is beautiful.” She replied with a big smile and turned to walk towards her mirror to get a proper look. Hades followed her and moved her long waves aside to one shoulder so that he could fasten it.

“I am having your crown made to match it. That is, it will be a smaller, more feminine version of my own.” Hades said.

“My crown?” she asked, the excitement evident in her voice.

“Yes my sweet, a queen must have a crown. And the queen of the Underworld must have the most magnificent crown, given that she rules over all the wealth in the earth.” He said as he kissed her neck just below her ear.

She loved the feel of his beard on her skin and closed her eyes to savor it. He knew she enjoyed the feeling, and continued to press soft kisses into her neck and down to her shoulder. Inhaling deeply, she melted back into his body, letting go of the garment she’d been clutching and it fell to the floor. She felt his large hands glide up her arms and an appreciative groan deep in his throat at her revealing her naked body.

Persephone kept her eyes shut. Hades lightly skimmed her sides and then brought his hands to rub her belly and then come up to grab her breasts. Persephone gasped as he kneaded her, her nipples hardened to his touch.

“Look at yourself,” Hades commanded quietly.

Persephone let her eyes flutter open and stare into the mirror, taking in her naked body and Hades towering form behind her, her breasts in his hands.

“Look at how beautiful you are,” Hades whispered against her neck, his fingers rolling her nipples until they were super sensitive. A pleasure filled moan escaped her lips and her eyes

closed again as she pushed her bottom back into his groin.

Hades groaned and let one hand slide down her belly to cup her sex. Persephone arched her back and Hades slipped a finger inside of her folds. She had already begun to become wet, and Hades smiled against her neck where he was still pressing wet and insistent kisses into her skin. Persephone's breath sped up and she began to grind into his hand, impatient to feel more pleasure. Hades brought his finger up to stroke her clit and she laid her head back on his shoulder while she moaning loudly. The sound of her pleasure and the sight of her in the mirror making love to his hand was about to undo him.

He grabbed her by the hips and turned her around to bring her to the bed. Pushing her down on it face first, Persephone tried to get up but he held her down. He climbed onto the bed behind her and spread her legs, settling between them. Fingers digging into her hips he brought her bottom to position in front of his groin. Freeing his manhood, he brought his tip to her opening but stopped just short of plunging into her.

Persephone was trembling. *Had he been too harsh with her just now?*

"My love?" he called to her.

"Darling?" she answered, breathing hard and turning her head slightly to look backwards.

"Did I hurt you? You are trembling." he said, loosening his grip on her hips.

He heard her laugh as she turned enough to look him in the eyes.

"With want for you." She replied, a wicked smile playing on her own lips now. "Spare me nothing, my lord." She said, her pupils dilated and her voice full of yearning.

Hades felt the animal in him take over, casting his restraint aside and allowing instinct and need to consume him. He plunged his manhood into her dripping folds, parting her and settling deep inside. Her back arched and her head came back in a scream. Hades built their pace rapidly, burying himself in her only to withdraw and repeat, over and over. Persephone, still wearing the necklace, rocked on her knees to bring herself back into him hard, over and over again.

Hades mated with her like something wild. Sometimes he wanted to make love to her, other times he wanted simply to mate with her, to put it gently. This was one of those times. For her part Persephone enjoyed both. At the moment, the primal possession she was experiencing was pure ecstasy to her. He had forced himself on her and she had loved it. She welcomed it. Being at the mercy of her love was immensely gratifying in its own way. Though sometimes she did prefer slow, sensual, and gentle love making.

Hades felt his release building, but he wanted to make sure she came first. Reaching around her with one hand, he found her clit and began to stroke it forcefully and as fast as he could. Persephone arched her back violently and began to cry out in pleasure, hoarse moans getting louder and louder until he could feel her channel tightening and her orgasm washing over her. Her legs shook and her whole body tensed. Her core's tightening on him caused Hades to erupt in her. Half yelling, half growling, Hades spent himself inside her and collapsed on top, quickly rolling off to lie next to her. Persephone had barely registered his weight as she lay face down with her eyes closed, trying to catch her breath.

Hades took a moment to recover, then lay on his side facing her. He smoothed his hand down her back, moving her hair aside to lean over and place soft kisses down the length of her spine. Persephone hummed in contentment as he did, turning her face towards him.

“Darling,” she breathed deeply and spoke to him in low, sated voice. “That was wonderful. I love to feel you possess me like that. To be wholly at your mercy,” she said rolling onto her back and pulling him into an embrace where she wrapped her limbs around him. Hades lay over her, staring down into her soft, comforting brown eyes and finding peace there. He then lightly traced the edges of the necklace he had just given her as it draped over her collarbone.

“If I am to be thanked in this way for giving you a present, I shall have to give you one every day.” He said smiling down at her.

Persephone laughed. “Do we not make love enough my lord? We only do so several times a day and night.” She mused.

Hades smiled. “I cannot get enough of you, nor shall I ever.” He replied.

“You had best not, for I will never tire of you my love. Even after all the temples and monuments of the world are fallen to dust and ruin.” She said, more seriously now as she gazed up into his mesmerizing blue eyes.

She stopped his heart when she spoke to him like that. Hades brought his lips down on hers, capturing her mouth in a deep kiss. Their tongues mated for a good long while. When he finally broke the kiss, he sighed and forced himself into a sitting position. He took her hand in his two large ones and brought it to his lips to kiss tenderly.

“As much as I would prefer to stay in bed with you all day, I am afraid I must return to my duties.” Hades said glumly and Persephone pouted up at him. Hades swung his feet over the side of the bed and began to fix his tunic. Persephone raised up on her knees and came to sit behind him, inserting her hands into his hair to massage his scalp.

Hades closed his eyes and leaned back into her, humming his pleasure as she worked his scalp under her fingers. It was her turn to move his hair and press kisses into his neck, even nipping at his earlobes.

She was making it so hard to leave their bedchamber he thought, as though it was not already hard enough. He sighed and vowed he would stay but a moment longer. He was tired, and she was relaxing him.

“Hades?” Persephone asked.

“Hmmm?” was the only answer Hades could produce, his eyes still shut.

“Why are there so many souls passing over? Is there a war in the Upperworld?” she asked.

Hades eyes opened at that question. He had not expected it, and wondered if he should answer her truthfully. He knew he should; they were husband and wife and they should always be honest with each other. But he did not want to trouble her, which he felt certain the whole truth would do. His mind raced for a proper answer.

“There is always a struggle of some sort going on with the humans. You know how the mortals are, they crave conflict. However, I believe there is some sort of food shortage at the

moment that is the true culprit..." he said, hoping that answer would be sufficient enough and the conversation could turn elsewhere.

Of course, the true and complete answer was that Demeter was throwing a fit in the Upperworld at the loss of her daughter and neglecting her duties as goddess of the harvest. As a result of her selfishness and grief, mankind was suffering and paying with their very lives. Men, women and children of every age and social status were passing before him these days, no one spared by Demeter's abandonment of her sacred duties.

This was in no way Persephone's fault. But he knew she was likely to feel blame for it, for leaving her mother and causing her such grief that she simply let the mortals die. He could not bring himself to tell her. She was so happy. They were so happy. He did not want her pretty head troubled with something that she could not have known would happen or prevent. This was the fault of Demeter alone. For being so petty and possessive, he thought. He did not miss the irony of that though, as he was dangerously possessive of Persephone himself. But she was his wife, and willingly so. She had chosen this life as much as he had wanted it for her, and she had a right to do as she pleased and to be happy without feeling guilty he told himself.

Besides, he knew Zeus wouldn't let this go on for long. He would force her to see reason and resume her duties. This would pass. All would eventually be set right up there, and Persephone never need know or be troubled by it. He was simply protecting her, he told himself. Besides, the Upperworld was not their domain and not theirs to worry about.

Persephone thought a little on his response, but then seemed to have dismissed it as she didn't question Hades further. She turned it over in her mind though, wondering if her mother had anything to do with it all. Her mother was most certainly sad and angry, but she couldn't imagine her mother would neglect the duties she loved so much, or the mortals for that matter. Her mother was too dignified and proud for such low actions. Turning her thoughts to happier things, Persephone brought her arms around Hades to embrace him from behind.

"Hades?" she said prettily into his ear.

"Yes, love?"

"If you must return to your duties, may I join you?" she asked.

"But darling, your throne is not yet finished." He pointed out.

"No...." she said mischievously, "But.....I could just sit in your lap." She replied smiling widely at her husband as she moved to stare him in the face now.

Hades laughed. "Oh, yes. I can hear it now. Lord Hades dispenses judgments with the beautiful goddess of spring draped across him on his throne. That will reach your father's ears within a day." He chuckled dryly, knowing she had been joking, but considering it all the same.

"It was just a suggestion, my love." She said, kissing him firmly on the lips. She was practically in his lap now, and still deliciously naked.

Hades pulled her across his lap and held her behind her shoulders and under her knees, eyeing her hungrily again.

“I thought you had to return to your duties, my king.” Persephone said playfully.

Hades grinned at her and quickly rose from the bed with her still in his arms. Persephone yelped in surprise as he spun around and deposited her on the bed, quickly climbing on top.

“The dead can wait,” he said and buried his face in her glorious and ample bosom. Persephone squealed in surprise and delight, happy to go back to bed for the day.

7. Troublesome Thoughts

Hades sat on his throne, tired and troubled by the ever constant stream of souls passing before him. Why had his brother not put a stop to all the nonsense with Demeter neglecting her duties and allowing the mortals to die? And very likely, the earth to die as well?

Demeter would simply have to move past her grief, he told himself. She could not have Persephone back, so this fit off hers was pointless, selfish, and would inevitably have to end. She had been a fool to ever have convinced herself that she could keep Persephone all to herself forever. Persephone had not devoted herself to a life of abstinence like some of her sisters, Athena or Artemis. Demeter had forced it on her and never allowed her to make any decisions of her own, other than what flowers to weave in her hair that day, Hades thought angrily.

He cast his eyes to his left. Her throne and crown would be finished soon, and she would be seated properly at his side. He considered how sad it would make her to see some of those that passed over, particularly the children and babes, of which she wanted one so very much. Hades then considered the heartache it would cause her to know that they were passing over due to her mother's inability to let her go. He feared possibly having to tell her all of this eventually. He never wanted to see her sad, and he knew this would cause her much pain and heartache, even though she was not at fault.

Hades rubbed his brow and shut his eyes. He wanted so much to be done with his duties for the day and return to his love's side. She was currently out of doors, or perhaps with Hecate, or perhaps both, as one or the other was typically the case when she was not with him. Hecate had been showing her some of the magic and secrets of her practice, which Persephone was apparently enjoying. He knew she was feeling a bit out of place with not being able to grow anything here, and he was glad that she had something to occupy her mind and time. Despite her inability to create life in his realm, she still enjoyed strolling around out of doors. She had spent essentially her entire life outside, and even though all that grew in the grey wastes was ghostly asphodel, Persephone still took pleasure in long walks through them.

Forcing his mind back to the present and on the soul of the particularly obnoxious merchant who was babbling on in front of him, Hades was determined to get through the rest of the day so that he would soon be back in his love's arms. He could only hope that this endless barrage before him was nearing its end.

Persephone was indeed out of doors, strolling through the grey waste and picking asphodel blooms to weave into a crown. A smile crossed her lips as she imagined greeting her lord when he came to their bed chamber that night, wearing nothing but said crown and with blooms scattered over the bed and covering her most intimate areas. They were the only flowers that grew in the Underworld, and Persephone was doing her best to love them, though she missed her crocuses, lilies, larkspurs, roses, violets and irises more than she had words to say. But their loss was a fair price to be with her lord. Other than the loss of her mother, every

other sacrifice she had made to be with Hades seemed trivial and not significant enough to make her regret her decision.

Hecate was leisurely walking behind Persephone, keeping the young goddess company as she often did in her spare moments. Next to Hades, Hecate was also Persephone's greatest teacher and source of information regarding her new home. There was one question in particular that Persephone had been meaning to ask the goddess, and now that they were alone, thought it an ideal time.

"Hecate, there is something that has been troubling me, though I have not explicitly stated to Hades. I was wondering if perhaps, you might be able to assist me with a problem we *might* have encountered?" Persephone said, turning to look at the mysterious goddess.

"A problem, my queen? I find it difficult to believe you and Lord Hades have any," Hecate said, though secretly she knew exactly what the problem in question was.

"Oh, well yes, we are very happy. So happy in fact that there is only one thing in the entire universe that could make me happier." Persephone said, looking at the ground and playing nervously with her fingers.

"You want his child." Hecate said simply and very matter of fact.

Persephone's head shot up in surprise. "You know? Has he spoken of this to you?" Persephone asked.

Hecate shook her head. "No, no my lady. But it is natural, for females who are deeply in love, to want to carry their lord's child. You have been in the Underworld for more than two months now and not conceived. This troubles you, yes?"

Persephone looked a little embarrassed, but nodded her head in agreement with Hecate.

"You are perplexed as to why you have not conceived, as the act of making a child is the activity you in engage in the majority of the time?" Hecate further outlined Persephone's problem for her.

Persephone blushed and looked away, focusing anew on the asphodel wreath she was weaving. "I would not say that it is the majority of how I spend my time... Hades and I do lots of things other than couple...." Persephone defended them, though she could not think of any great examples at the moment.

"But you think that you have coupled enough that you should be with child by now, and that you are not causes you to fear that you cannot." Hecate further spoke Persephone's fears aloud.

Persephone looked at Hecate with sadness in her eyes that answered the goddess's question.

Hecate smiled at her. She was about to lay her fears to rest, but wondered for a moment why Hades had not done so. Perhaps he himself did not know? He had never wanted to have children, and very likely had no idea at all regarding the matter.

"My queen, you are a goddess of flowers and life, you are as fertile as any goddess who ever drew breath, more so likely. Your lord husband is a powerful and potent god, who

undoubtedly has the ability to procreate.” Hecate began and saw the young, innocent goddess listen with doe eyes and carefully hanging on her every word.

“However, your lord rules the land of the dead. This barren, sterile, unfruitful realm where life is not nor can be conceived.” Hecate continued.

Persephone considered that and quickly decided that it made sense. Hecate saw hope springing anew on her face. “So, in order to conceive, Hades and I only need couple in the Upperworld?” she asked hopefully.

“Essentially, yes my lady.” Hecate answered simply. “I am surprised your lord husband has not thought of this himself.”

Persephone was awash with happiness and hope that she only needed Hades to take her to the Upperworld to make love and then finally be with child. She was so excited and eager that she was not entirely listening to the last thing that Hecate had said.

“What was that last part? Hades should have known?” Persephone asked.

Hecate thought perhaps she should not have said that. “I only meant, my lady, that our king might have marveled at this predicament himself and realized that it was his realm, not himself or yourself that was standing in the way of conception.” She replied.

“But, if Hades suspected such a thing why would he not tell me? He knows how much I want a baby...” Persephone half asked her, half thought out loud.

“It is possible that he never had the thought. But... if he did, perhaps he does not want a child just yet. It would be very understandable if he wanted you all to himself for a while.” Hecate mused.

“All to himself? How would a child change that? I am completely and entirely his, and so shall I ever be.” Persephone asked.

She is so innocent, Hecate thought. “A child would likely monopolize you and take your attention from him, which I would warrant a guess, is all his at the moment.”

Persephone considered that. Yes, a baby would require an enormous amount of love, care, and attention. That would, naturally, require her to give Hades a little less attention, but no less love. She would question him about all of this tonight when he came to bed. The thought of her dark and terrible lord being jealous of a little babe made her smile and almost giggle out loud.

Hecate hoped she had not said the wrong thing, though she could see the doubt tugging at the young goddess’s mind. She was more afraid that Hades would be angered by her words, as Persephone would most certainly be posing these questions to him at the first opportunity she had. Walking silently behind her queen now as she was lost in deep thought, she hoped Persephone would leave that last bit out.

Far above the Underworld, Zeus sat on his throne, disquieted and ruminating over the matter of Demeter. The grief stricken goddess of the harvest. His former lover. When he had first learned that their daughter had gone missing, he immediately suspected Hades. Who else

could so easily take her from the earth without a trace? And, who else would want to? He had seen the way Persephone had regarded his dark elder brother in that very room only a few months earlier. She had not been afraid, intrigued rather, which he figured was enough to pique Hades' interest in the beautiful and desirable goddess of spring.

And this had not troubled him. If anything, he believed it a good thing. His brother had been furious and vengeful when they cast lots those many years ago and he won the Underworld. Since then, he had been irritable, difficult, and bordering on belligerent at times. He had largely withdrawn from Olympus and any contact with the Upperworld that was not absolutely necessary. Hades also had the power to unleash immense and terrible forces from his realm if he ever had a mind to do so. Zeus did not think he would, but wanted to keep his brother placated as much as it was possible. If Persephone would occupy and content him, then Zeus was happy to let him have her.

Even more, though he knew that every goddess he could name would disagree with him, Hades was a very fitting husband for any goddess. He was the elder of the three, powerful, ruled a vast and great kingdom, and possessed all the wealth and riches that were contained in the earth. Truly, Persephone as a minor goddess of flowers and springtime, should be honored that such a one would take her for a bride.

But, Zeus knew all too well, Demeter did not see it that way. The mortals were dying from lack of food and sustenance with her abandonment of her duties. Without the mortals, fewer sacrifices were given up to the gods and there were fewer and fewer to worship them. It was a predicament that must be dealt with, and Zeus had tried to reason with Demeter. She had wandered for a month searching for any sign of her daughter. It was Selene, the goddess of the moon, who had watched Hades take a sleeping Persephone into his arms and down into a great chasm in the earth, that sealed up so seamlessly behind him that no creature, having not seen it with their own eyes, could believe that it had happened.

Demeter looked a thousand years older now, her brown hair now streaked with grey and her visage as forlorn as one who had lost ten children. Zeus had sent Hermes to try and reason with her, to make her see that her actions were jeopardizing the whole of their existence. Not to mention that Hades was a better husband than Persephone could ever have hoped for, and that it was a testament to her grace and beauty that she had caught the eye of a god who was known for his solitary existence and for having forsaken the Upperworld almost entirely. Demeter had of course vowed to herself that Persephone would remain a virgin goddess all her life, but Zeus had not particularly wanted that for her. He was truly indifferent, but Demeter had tried to force a fate on their daughter without taking into consideration her own feelings. There was no way Persephone was a virgin now, he knew, and so why not simply let her be? She was a queen now, and Demeter should be able to find some comfort or even pride in that. But she had proven that she felt only grief, anger, and despondency. Not to mention a complete and total disregard for the fate of everything else in the known universe.

This could not endure, Zeus knew that. He would have to find a way to mediate and mend this situation. As much as he dreaded dealing with Demeter and what he supposed would be her complete lack of willingness to cooperate and compromise, more so he feared angering his brother. Hades felt he had received the worst end of every deal between the three brothers, and would likely be livid at the mere suggestion that he had to answer for his actions. That he would be asked to compromise when it came to his new consort would no doubt enrage him.

Zeus was brought from these thoughts by his son striding into the room. Apollo, god of the sun and the very image of perfect, Grecian youth, came to stand before his father's throne.

"Father," he said, inclining his head in reverence.

"Apollo," Zeus acknowledged him, a grim and weary look still defining his features.

"Father....you must do something. The earth..."

"I know, I intend to." Zeus cut him off. Apollo had seen the death and desolation unfold on the earth below more clearly than anyone, as he took the sun across the sky daily behind his chariot. He had watched the earth become barren and miserable; the humans starving and dying off in droves now. It was he that first told Zeus of just how terrible Demeter's neglect of her sacred duties was becoming.

"You mean, you are going to force Hades to return Demeter's daughter to her?" Apollo asked, that being the only real solution he could see to this problem.

Zeus winced. "I don't know about that, exactly. Some sort of compromise will have to be reached between the two of them. Hades will not give her up completely.....if at all." Zeus said, more to himself than to Apollo.

"He cannot keep her if you will not allow it." Apollo pointed out.

"No, but, I am inclined to allow it. It is likely Demeter who will have to see reason, and who will be less likely to compromise I am afraid." Zeus returned. "But either way, this must be resolved immediately. I am sending Hermes to the Underworld tonight to summon Hades to Olympus."

"He will be sorely displeased." Apollo observed.

Zeus closed his eyes. "Yes, yes he will."

Thank you to everyone for the continued support and kind words! I meant to post sooner, and will try to keep to my every 2-3 day updating. And as you might guess, the honeymoon is about to be over. But, there will be a little more love before our couple is separated. More importantly though, can they have a baby? If they do, it will be a bit of a departure from myth, so if anyone is a strict adherent to what little is known, you may not love where that story goes. But as I said in my summary, this is just *my* version of the two love birds. :) Please read, review, and enjoy.

8. A Lonely Night

Persephone returned from her stroll and was now pacing back and forth in their chambers, anxiously awaiting Hades' return. He was so often on his throne these days. She would be glad when whatever was causing the mortals to cross over at such a rate would cease, for their sake and so that she could see her husband more often. The 'food shortage' that Hades had cited had been in her thoughts as well. She had tried to put it from her mind, but could not help but believe that her mother must have something to do with it. Was her mother alright? It was so difficult for her to believe that her mother would ever intentionally neglect her duties that she loved so much and took so seriously. If she was neglecting them, then something truly must be amiss. Something or someone must be preventing her from doing so. But she couldn't imagine who, and if something that terrible and significant had occurred in the Upperworld, surely Hades would have heard. He would tell her about something like that, she was sure. They did not keep secrets. Persephone told her love everything. She had bared not only her body but her entire soul to him, and she believed he had done the same. She was the only one who saw his tender and vulnerable moments. She was the only one who soothed and comforted him; she was the only one who could, and he was the same for her.

After pacing and waiting for what felt like forever, Persephone heard footsteps. She turned around to see her love enter their bed chamber and she decided to try and contain herself as long as she could instead of immediately throwing herself at him in excitement.

"Darling," she cooed at him.

Hades looked tired, but his face brightened as it came to rest upon his queen's face.

"My exquisite love," he returned, drawing nearer to her.

"Hades, I learned something today that has made me very happy." She said smiling at him brightly.

Hades held his breath. *Is she pregnant finally?*

Persephone took his hands in hers now that he had drawn close enough. Looking up into his eyes, she smiled and began. "Hecate says that it is your realm, not either of us to blame for our not conceived yet. She says all we need to do is go to the Upperworld to couple and I should be with child." Persephone said enthusiastically to her husband and waited for his response, which she expected to be as excited and joyful as she currently felt.

The Upperworld. Hades' face fell instantly and Persephone immediately registered the look. She gripped his hands a little tighter and frowned up at him.

"Darling?" she asked, "What is the matter? Why are you not happy?" she questioned him.

Hades felt trapped. He could not tell her why he couldn't take her to the Upperworld. He could not risk her seeing what he had so carefully kept from her all these weeks. She would not understand that though. She would demand an answer, and would take his lack of one for lack of want for a child. Hades felt his chest tighten. This would not end well.

“My love,” he began, not knowing exactly what he was going to say. “I, that is we, cannot go to the Upperworld now. With all the souls passing over, I need to be here, in my realm—”

“Hades! You act as though it would take us all day and all night to make love but once!” Persephone was half laughing at her husband, but becoming less happy and more concerned by the moment.

“Persephone—”

“It would take but a few moments my love, and I have not set foot in the Upperworld since you took me months ago—”

“Persephone—”

“We would be back before we know it—”

“Persephone!” Hades raised his voice but did not quite yell. Still, he had never spoke to her that way, and she immediately silenced herself and froze before him, her hands frozen in his. She looked up at him with doe eyes, startled and wondering what she had done to upset him so.

Hades took a deep breath and forced himself to calm down.

“Persephone,” he spoke quietly and steadily now. “We cannot travel to the Upperworld now.”

Persephone blinked up at him, not understanding.

“But—” she began but he cut her short yet again.

“It is not as simple as you think, you were asleep when I brought you here remember? You do not recall the journey or its hardship. You are inexperienced with that sort of travel—”

“But Charon could take us across the Styx, could he not?” she was not letting his matter go. She saw no good reason why they could not set foot above ground for all of ten minutes to couple and come home.

Hades sighed heavily. “That is not his purpose, to escort us to and from worlds. He has much more important duties to attend to.”

“What is more important than our conceiving?” Persephone shot back, becoming more and more upset, not to mention frustrated with her husband.

Hades sighed again and turned away from her to gather himself and attempt to formulate an argument that would not alarm her.

Persephone was horribly impatient waiting for him to respond. Hades knew how much she wanted a baby, his baby, and had been overjoyed earlier that day when she discovered the key to their conceiving. She had expected him to be the same, not refuse to fulfill her greatest desire.

When he still didn’t answer, she grew angry and continued “You don’t want a baby, do you?” she asked, remembering Hecate’s words from earlier that day.

Hades closed his eyes tightly and swallowed hard while he continued to think of ways to avert this crisis, if it could be averted.

He turned to face her again. "Of course I want a baby, that has nothing to do with this." He said firmly.

"Then why can we not go, why not tonight? Why not right now?" she pressed him beyond what he was prepared to endure at the moment.

"No, I have already told you why." He said even firmer but trying to control himself.

"But that is no reason—"

"It is because I say it is! Now that is enough!" Hades yelled this time and Persephone felt her heart constrict. He had never been angry at her before, never yelled at her before, and she felt like she couldn't breathe. Like needles were piercing at her heart.

She was breathing hard and could feel tears stinging her eyes. Hades was regarding her with an unreadable expression.

"Hecate was right. You just don't want a baby." She choked out.

Hades closed his eyes once more. He immediately hated himself for raising his voice and seeing her eyes well up.

"That is not true, my love." He said a little more tenderly and came back to stand in front of her.

She looked up at him, seeming afraid and not speaking. She felt a tear escape her eye and roll down her face as she tilted her head up to him.

'Darling, "he whispered and reached out to wipe it away with one finger, as he brought his other hand around her back to draw her to him.

She let herself be drawn into his chest but did not bring her arms up to embrace him. Hades sat his chin on top of her head and stroked her back with his hand.

"My love, forgive me. I did not mean to speak to you so." He said soothingly. "It is not that I do not want a child, but... perhaps we could wait a while longer? I have only had you but a little while. A baby will take your affections from me." Hades almost whispered to her now.

He had hastily decided on this approach because it was the only one he could make sense of at the moment. Truly, he had considered several times how a child would occupy so much of her time and take her attentions and affections from him, which he was not ready for. He had not expressed this feeling to her, knowing well how much she wanted a baby and how happy it would make her, but now that it served his purpose to use the argument he did so. He did want their baby, very much so, but he could wait a while longer if he had to.

He heard Persephone snuffle and she raised her head to look at him. "Take me from you? Nothing could ever do that, Hades. I cannot believe you would even think so." She said, still sounding hurt.

He placed a gentle kiss into her forehead. "Let me have you to myself a little while longer, my love. When this is all over and the souls stop passing over so frequently, we can go to the Upperworld. I promise we will have a child, my love." He caressed her hair and pushed a lock behind her ear gently.

He could tell she was still very sad, but that she had decided to stop fighting him. At least for the night anyway. She looked up at him and nodded ever so slightly and then turned to walk away from him. He pulled her back to him by the waist.

"Persephone?"

"I am tired my lord, I would like to go to bed." she answered, sounding despondent.

Tired. Hades may not have had a great amount of experience with women but he knew what that meant.

"Tired, my dear?" he asked, arching an eyebrow and looking very skeptical, but Persephone did not care.

He had been on his throne all day, listening to all manner of mortals, old, young pitiful, honorable, obnoxious-passing judgments as he did and had still not finished when he retired for the night, yet his only thoughts were coming to their bed. She had spent the day leisurely walking through the fields picking flowers and she was *tired*.

TIRED.

"Yes, Hades. I am tired. And I wish to go to sleep." Persephone returned, looking impatient with him again.

Frustrated beyond words, but wanting to avoid another argument, Hades made to suppress his desire. Not a day had passed since he brought her down here that they did not couple, and several times a day at that. He had not grown tired of her in the least, rather, it was if every day was the first time he had her all over again. She always expressed desire that matched his, until tonight.

But he knew he had hurt her with his harshness and disappointed her with his answer. He could not let her know what was transpiring above them. He wanted to protect her from it all. And protect her from her mother herself. He wondered what the grief stricken and likely maddened goddess would do if she knew her daughter were in the Upperworld but for a second. He had to keep her here for a while longer, at least as long as it took for his brother to resolve things.

What in the name of Tartarus was taking him so long?! Hades thought.

His attention was drawn back to the present as he watched Persephone climb into their bed and under the covers. She settled on her side, her back facing him and immediately becoming still, trying in earnest to fall asleep. Hades watched her for a few moments, trying to decide what to do with himself. He decided that sleeping next to her would be pointless. He had entered their chamber full of desire for her and it had not dissipated, not even after the argument, and he would not fall asleep if he were to lay next to her only to be denied.

Sighing a great and frustrated sigh, Hades turned to leave. If he could not sleep, he may as well go back to his throne and resume his duties. He cast one more look at his queen's form

on the bed as he walked from the room.

Persephone had not yet fallen asleep. She was staring at the wall, tears rolling down her face. Hades didn't want a child, at least not right now. But why had he not said that to begin with? And why had he become so angry so quickly? He had never spoken to her like that before, and she could not help but believe he was keeping something from her. Though what, she could only imagine.

She tried to fall asleep, but those thoughts, her injured feelings, and the returning desire for her husband that had been snuffed out during their argument assured her that sleep would not come anytime soon. She simply lay there, a tear falling here and there, wishing that the strange and unknown weight on her heart would be lifted.

9. The Messenger

Hades considered the events in their bedchamber as he walked the dark halls to his throne room. He should have made sure to formulate some excuse or better explanation in advance of why they couldn't venture to the Upperworld in case something like this came up, which it had. He had foolishly hoped that it simply wouldn't and that everything would be resolved in its own time. He also had not foreseen Hecate knowing the secret to why they could not conceive. It was not strange that she knew, but rather Hades was a little surprised that Persephone had taken such a matter to her so quickly. Persephone was so young, he thought. She had her whole life to be a mother, and in truth he would like to have her for his own a little while longer. Of course he wanted their child. He could think of nothing that would make him happier than he was now than to have a little god by his magnificent love. But he was also jealous and possessive of his love, a fact he acknowledged and did not feel sorry for.

What he did feel sorry for was hurting her, and dashing her hopes of a baby at the moment. It pained him to deny her anything, and if all was right and well in the world above he would take her there this instant to impregnate her as she had asked. But he could not risk it. Not while her mother was acting like something mad, unchecked by his brother and her former lover. Hades had a mind to pay his brother a visit regarding the matter, but would have to do so while his wife was otherwise occupied in order not to arouse her suspicion.

To add to all of this, he was a little hurt himself. Persephone had never denied him, had even spoken once that she would never do so. But tonight she had. He knew it was out of hurt and sadness more than anything. She may have even done so out of anger, but he knew she had not refused him out of a lack of desire for him. Still, her rejection stung him a little, not to mention he was horribly frustrated. Having finally reached his throne room, he lifted his ebony crown of sapphires to his head and took his seat, resuming his duties for what he imagined to be a long and lonely night.

Two or so hours had passed, but Persephone could not sleep. She lay in the great bed she and her husband shared, playing over in her mind what had transpired but a short while ago. It endeared him to her that he had not forced himself on her. He had every right to do so as her husband. Her body literally belonged to him. But he had not pressed her. He simply let her retire to bed as she had desired. He was so sweet and kind to her, it pained her for a moment that she had been so cross with him. He had lavished upon her every jewel and comfort that a queen could desire. He had wanted her. And she had seen how tired he was yet she had turned him from their bed. She was becoming very cross with herself now.

She then considered his reservations about having a baby. She believed that he wanted one, as he always assured her, but she had never considered that it might be too soon for a baby. She only knew that she loved Hades so much that she could not help but want his child. She had never even thought about children before him. She tried earnestly now to see it from his perspective, despite being hurt and angry that he would not take her above ground to make one.

A child would require lots of love, care and attention. She assumed she would likely be obsessed with their baby. She would not allow it to stay in a nursery, it would have to have a cradle next to her bedside, when it did not sleep with her even. She considered how their lovemaking might wake the baby, and she would have to control her screaming and moaning, which she did freely. But Hades loved her display of pleasure for him, and he kept her in such pleasure that none of her passion was exaggerated. She considered further that their nights of constant love making would be interrupted by a hungry baby, that she would then have to feed and coddle. She then wondered if her breasts would be off limits to her husband while she was breast feeding. There were so many questions she had not even thought about.

And what about pregnancy? Could they couple while she was with child? Surely they could, their baby would be a god and deathless, but would it upset it? Would sex even feel the same? What if Hades found her undesirable when she began to swell and didn't even want to make love to her? She began to trouble herself with these unanswerable questions, and wondered if Hades wasn't right to want to wait a while.

What she could not figure out though was why he was so angry at the idea of going to the Upperworld. His excuses, before saying he didn't want a child yet, made no sense. He was busy, but not that busy. They made love constantly. And if Hades could get her from one world to the other while carrying her unconscious, it could not be too terribly hard. She hated the thought that there was something he wasn't telling her, she didn't want to believe that about him. The idea of it hurt her, but she knew not what else to think. She trusted and loved her husband, though. He would not lie to her, he never had, she told herself. They wouldn't have even fought tonight if she hadn't been so insistent on his giving her a baby, and after thinking about it carefully could see that Hades had a point.

She looked to his side of the bed, cold and empty. He should be next to her, or better yet on top of her. Feeling put out without herself and wanting her husband, Persephone forced herself out of bed. Putting on her sandals, she left the room to seek out her lord.

Hades had grown weary after finishing the judgments. He now dozed on his throne. It was uncomfortable, to sleep sitting upright, but he did not want to disturb his queen. Nor did he want to be tempted by being so near her.

Persephone entered the throne room quietly to see it empty save for her slumbering lord. Her heart hurt to see him alone and sleeping uncomfortably on his throne. He should be next to her in their bed. She approached quietly so as not to startle him. Stopping just before the three steps that lead up to his black, marble throne, Persephone called quietly to her love.

"Hades....my love...." She called and his eyes instantly snapped open. The look in them was like an animal that had been caught off guard and was ready to attack. He quickly registered his wife before him though, and groggily sat up straight.

"Persephone? What are you doing out of bed?" he asked, fearing she had come to continue the argument they had left in their bedchamber.

Persephone blinked innocently at him before answering. "I am lonely without my husband." She said sweetly. "He should be in our bed."

Hades' visage softened at her. She wanted to make amends. And she didn't seem depressed or angry now. Hopefully what occurred earlier was forgotten now.

“My sweet, that is my only desire.” Hades replied. “Am I to suppose that you are no longer tired?” he said, a smile barely playing on his face now.

Persephone broke into a wide grin. “No, my lord. I am not.” She replied and approached his throne, slowly pulling her gown up as she did.

Elsewhere in the Hades’ palace, Hecate was up and about. Walking towards the great entranceway intent on making her way into the gardens, she noticed a most interesting and unusual sight. Hermes, the messenger of Zeus, was coming towards her. He was striding forward with purpose, and Hecate knew something must be horribly amiss.

As he crossed the threshold of Hades’ palace, Hecate greeted him.

“Hermes,” she inclined her head and he returned the gesture.

“The hour is late for bringing messages, even from Olympus is it not?” she asked, eaten up with curiosity.

“Indeed. However, the urgency of this particular message cannot wait.” Hermes replied cryptically. “I do not suppose your lord is awake.”

“Actually.....I believe he is. And on his throne no less.” Hecate answered, a smile tugging at the corners of her mouth.

“Ah, excellent. I will see him.” Hermes said.

“I do not think he is receiving at the moment.....I would wait to disturb him if I were you.” It was Hecate’s turn to be cryptic.

“The king of the gods will not wait, nor will his message.” Hermes said firmly and confidently, striding towards the throne room of the lord of the dead.

“I fear you will wish you had waited.....” Hecate mused and did not make to follow him.

Hermes cut his eyes at her and continued towards the great bronze doors that stood out in sharp contrast to the pitch black walls and corridors of the underworld. As they opened and Hermes strode into the throne room, he stopped abruptly as he took in the scene before him.

Hades throne stood at the other end of the dark and otherwise empty room. Hades was seated on it, though all that could be seen of him were his legs. On top of him, straddling him rather with her back to Hermes, was Persephone. Her grey gown was pushed up almost to her waist, her head thrown back, her voice filling the great, empty room with her cries of pleasure. Hades’ crown, which was too large for her, sat sideways on her head.

Hermes was transfixed in shock at what he was seeing for a moment, and could only stare. From the wailings and ravings of Demeter, he had expected to find her a captive. Actually, all of Olympus assumed that she had been taken against her will and was a captive consort, miserable and heartbroken in her new home that could be in no greater contrast to the one she had been snatched from. Instead, she nearly appeared the image of a wanton whore. Hermes shook himself out of his daze and cleared his throat. It went unheard, not loud enough to be noticed over the cries of ecstasy that were bouncing off the walls.

Hermes cleared his voice again, loud enough this time to reach Hades’ ears. Hades’ piercing blue eyes appeared from around the undulating body of his queen, and without

blinking, bore into Hermes. Persephone did not notice, for as soon as Hades saw Hermes he began to thrust hard and fast into her, whereas before he had been allowing her to ride him as she pleased. He was slamming his body into her with supernatural speed that Hermes thought might break her. Hades hands gripped her waist and brought her hips down onto his again and again until she screamed in completion. All the while, Hades never broke his gaze with Hermes, never even blinked, and if it were possible to murder with one's eyes the messenger god would have been dead a hundred times over.

Spent, Persephone fell forward into Hades, who stood up, hands around her bottom and turned to deposit her on the throne, her chest heaving and his crown still lopsided on her head. She still did not seem to realize Hermes' presence, but closed her eyes and slumped back on the throne, a tired smile stretching over her face as she recovered.

Hades, with a dark and threatening look, strode down from his throne and towards the messenger. As he approached, he adjusted his tunic to cover his manhood, though not hurriedly and again never taking his gaze from Hermes.

"You have traveled far to have nothing to say" Hades voice came low and menacing.

Hermes, still reeling from the sight that had seconds ago unfolded before him, straightened himself. "Lord Hades," he found his voice, bowing to the dread god.

"I come with an urgent message from your brother and the king of all the gods." He continued.

Hades was circling Hermes like a great predator, unnerving him but he kept his eyes straight forward, though trying not to look at Persephone, for fear it would anger Hades.

"We are waiting with bated breath..." Hades said sarcastically, still angry at having been disturbed in the midst of his favorite activity.

"You are commanded to return the daughter of Demeter to her at once," Hermes said quickly for fear of the response it would elicit.

Persephone seemed to only now realize that Hermes was there, and sat up on the throne, her expression fearful and looking to Hades.

Hades chuckled darkly. "Demeter's daughter is now my wife, my queen, and my consort." He pronounced each word with particular emphasis. "And as she has tasted the fruit of my realm, cannot return to the Upperworld or to her mother." He replied smoothly, unmoved by Hermes message.

Hermes' expression darkened. If that were true, Hades was right. Also, the scene before him was not what had been described to him. The story of Persephone being snatched in the night and raped by the dread lord of the dead, then held prisoner in his palace to be used for his pleasure was in stark contrast to what he saw. It was undeniable that Persephone had been using Hades for her pleasure when he had walked in the throne room. Persephone, who looked terrified at the mere suggestion of being separated from her "captor," was now draped across his throne and wearing his very crown. Had she been a willing participant all along? Had this all been her idea even? Hermes could not help but wonder now.

Hermes returned to the moment, and found his voice again. "Though that may be so, I cannot be the judge. If you will not return her, then you must appear before Zeus to answer in

the matter. You are summoned to Olympus as soon as the sun rises.” Hermes said, though much less confidently than before.

Hades came to stand directly in front of him now, a head taller than him and looking down into his eyes with his icy blue ones. Hermes forced himself to hold his stare, unnerving though it was to do.

“Be gone,” were Hades’ only words.

“My lord—” Hermes began but Hades cut him off.

“Be gone while I still allow it.” he all but growled at the most unwelcome messenger.

Hermes backed up and turned to stride from the throne room, trying to maintain some shred of dignity through his fear, though he was sure he had been trembling by the end of the encounter. As he passed through the great bronze doors, Persephone took off the crown and laid it on the throne, practically leaping into her love’s arms.

“Hades,” she said breathlessly “no one can separate us now, can they?” her eyes wide and searching his.

Hades held his sweet love close and smoothed her hair with one large hand. “In no way that I know of, but your mother is likely searching the heavens and the earth for a solution.” He said gravely.

“When they see how much I love you, how happy I am, surely they will let me remain with you, if there is some way father could seek to part us after all?” She said but it was obvious from the sound of her voice that she had not convinced herself.

Hades smiled down at her and kissed her forehead. “I am sure you are right.” He told her, though not believing it. She laid her head against his chest and closed her eyes. As she did so, several things slid into place in her mind.

Must be returned to her mother. Hades anger and refusal to bring her to the Upperworld. The ‘food shortage’ sweeping the earth.

Persephone pulled back and looked into her husband’s eyes. The blue orbs met hers, and at first did not recognize the look in their brown mate’s. Slowly though, Persephone saw Hades’ face change from a look of loving comfort to one that was.....afraid?

“Hades? What have you not told me?” she asked plainly.

Hades said nothing at first, only stared back into her eyes. He was trapped. He would have to tell her. She would not understand why he had kept it from her. He only hoped that she could forgive him for doing so.

“Hades?” she asked again, becoming more upset by the second. “Hades answer me.” She said sternly and she felt her pulse beginning to rise.

“Persephone. I have told you the truth. As I always do.” Hades said seriously and his smile was gone now.

She was not satisfied. “But not the entire truth.” She replied instantly.

Hades felt his throat go dry. His mouth was set in a thin line as he looked down at her, studying her face. His hesitancy to speak infuriated Persephone.

“What is it that you haven’t told me? What is happening in the Upperworld? How is it that my mother can demand me back, with my father’s very messenger delivering the command?!”

“I’ve told you, as I told Hermes, you cannot return to the Upperworld now that—”

“Do not ignore my questions!” It was Persephone’s turn to yell.

Hades shut his mouth and gritted his teeth. He was not going to get out of this, as she was becoming angrier by the second. When he hesitated again Persephone quickly turned to walk from the throne room but Hades grabbed her by the arm and spun her back around to crash into his chest. Her face was nearly touching his they were so close.

“All I have done, all I have kept from you, has been to protect you.” Hades said slowly and dangerously.

Persephone’s chest was rising and falling rapidly. She should be afraid, and a small part of her was. He was a tall and imposing god, with a dark visage that was frightening even when he was completely at ease. When he was angry, as he was now, his blue eyes were cold as ice and his gaze could practically turn those it fell upon into stone. Regal though he was, an energy rolled off of him when he was displeased that was almost animal.

But Persephone was too upset at the moment to give in to the tiny bit of fear she felt, and pressed him further. “My mother is the reason so many souls are passing over isn’t she? She is starving the humans and using it to demand me back!”

Persephone had put it all together, and as Hades stood there staring back at her wordlessly he confirmed her accusations.

Angry, and now horrified, Persephone pushed away from Hades and turned so he could not see her crying, but as she sobbed so loudly he could not help but hear it.

Hades closed his eyes and clenched his fists. This is exactly what he had wanted to avoid. Not only was she horrified by the acts of her mother that she surely felt were her fault, but he had wounded her with his dishonesty.

But he did not feel he had been truly dishonest, only he withheld the majority of the truth from her. He knew this was essentially the same thing, but he hadn’t exactly lied to her. And he had done it all with her best interests in mind.

Of course, she would not see it that way. She continued to sob, and Hades did not know what to say. He began to approach her slowly, but she must have heard him, and looked over her shoulder at him. “This is all my fault,” she choked, her eyes red and her cheeks wet with free flowing tears.

“It is not. It is solely your mother’s.” Hades said firmly.

“No!” she replied, turning to face him again.

“If you had abducted me then no, but I begged and pleaded for this. With no regard for how it would make her feel. I was so eager to be free of her and in your arms, I did not

consider her feelings or what this might do to her. I did not even tell her goodbye!” Persephone broke into another hard sob and Hades did not advance on her, rather he thought he should let her get it all out. At the moment, she seemed angry with herself, not him.

“She would never have let you go, my love. You know that. That is why you never told her of me, of us, how happy we were, because you knew she would do all in her power to separate us forever. Have you forgotten all of that?” Hades asked pointedly.

Persephone sniffled. “No, no of course not. But you! You knew all this time why the mortals were dying off so rapidly yet you refused to tell me! Even when I asked you plainly, you lied to me!”

She had remembered she was angry with him. Hades sighed and tried not to become defensive.

“I have never lied to you. The food shortage is true. I may not have told you the cause, but that was done to spare you heartache and the blame that you now erroneously assign to yourself for the actions of another.”

“Oh but Hades it is my fault! All that happened because of a decision I made, and if you had told me the truth when I asked you over a month ago now I could have done something about this!”

Hades scoffed. “Done what? Do you think your mother can really be reasoned with? She has neglected her sacred duties and turned her back on the entire world! She is mad with grief and selfishness!” Hades roared.

Persephone did not care for his account of her mother. While she had done a terrible thing, Demeter was still her mother, and what she had done had been out of grief and longing for her. Persephone could not be entirely furious at her mother for that, rather she was furious with herself for causing her mother so much pain, even if there had been no other way to be with Hades.

“I could have gone to her, reasoned with her. Let her know that I am alright and happy. Not the abducted, slave to the lord of the dead that she must imagine me to be. She would have listened to me. If I had only thought all of this through before....” Persephone trailed off and Hades felt a twinge of a new kind of anger.

“Thought what through?” he asked coldly.

Persephone looked at him as though she didn’t know what he meant.

“Why, the manner in which I came to be here. My....disappearance from the earth. It must have caused her so much panic and desperation...” Persephone said sorrowfully.

“Do not feel sorry for her! She does not deserve it! And further, you talk as though you regret your decision!” Hades was on the verge of losing control. If she kept sympathizing with her mother he was going to erupt and he didn’t want that. But she was making it more and more difficult to contain his temper.

“She is my mother and I love her! Nothing can change that! That has nothing to do with what I feel for you, Hades! How can you suggest that I regret being your wife when I sacrificed everything for it to be so?!” Persephone felt hurt and angry anew.

"If you could but hear yourself you would understand. But it does not matter that I didn't tell you; I would not have allowed you to go to the Upperworld anyway."

"You accuse mother of jealousy and possessiveness but you are very the same!"

"You are my wife! And I am your lord and husband! I have the right to prevent you from doing things that put you in danger, especially when you cannot see it yourself. And since you have tasted the fruit of my domain, you can never leave unless I allow. Which I do not, and will not!"

Hades had screamed that last sentence. He had gone over the edge with her sorrow for her mother. Demeter had been without her daughter for a few months. He had been alone for centuries and no one had felt a moment's sorrow for him. He could have, and by rights should have demanded so much more of the Upperworld and its king, but all he wanted now was his bride. And it was not as though he had taken a goddess who had duties essential to life and to the universe. He loved his bride, but he knew as well as she did that flowers would grow with or without her.

But that mattered nothing. He did not care that she was a minor goddess. She could have been a mortal, and Hades would have loved her all the same. He would move mountains and drag the stars down below the earth to make her happy if she asked him. But she wanted the one thing he could not allow; to go home. Even if it was for but a little while, it was too dangerous. Some terrible turn of fates, or magic that even he did not know of might take her from him. She had to remain here. Safe with him. Forever.

"Still, you should have told me Hades! We promised to share everything, to be one as husband and wife in every way possible. I have kept nothing from you. But I wonder have you kept anything else from me? Like your supposedly not wanting a baby because it would take me from you? Or was that too a lie to keep me from pleading to go to the Upperworld?"

What little of Hades' cheeks that could be seen above his beard were fiery red now. He had passed angry and was approaching rage.

"You go too far with your accusations, my queen." He said lowly, almost growling.

"And you should have foreseen this, my king. But you hoped I would never put it all together, and in doing so how many innocent mortals have perished because of it?" Persephone responded, though feeling some of that fear from earlier creep back into her heart. She had never seen Hades look as he did now. Dark and threatening. She was so used to his smiles and tenderness. The god that stood before her now was so changed by his fury she was not sure she knew him.

"You will not blame your mother's pettiness on me. Or your own decisions. Do you recall how earnestly you pleaded with me to take you away? How insistent you were on this fate? Do not presume to make me feel guilty. I feel nothing." Hades spat at her and Persephone had nothing to say back, she only held his murderous gaze and let new, aching tears slide down her face. He was right in that she had the greatest guilt to bear.

With that realization, Persephone turned to walk from the throne room, slowly and silently. Hades watched her go, but did not make to stop her. Once she had reached the bronze doors, she had one last thought and turned back to her husband.

He was unmoved, like a statue. “I am to bed to rest in attempt to make myself presentable when I come before my father tomorrow.”

Hades returned her stare for a few charged seconds, then inclined his head to her ever so slightly, his cold stare never breaking eye contact.

Persephone seemed satisfied with that and turned to go back to their bedchambers, feeling even more alone than before. Hades watched her go and listened until he could no longer hear her gentle footfalls. She thought he was going to take her with him to Olympus. He wouldn't dare.

First, he did not respond well to demands, not even from the king of the gods. Secondly, she left this realm when he allowed it, not at the whims of others. Third, and most important, he knew she would attempt to take the blame for all of this with the same arguments she had just thrown at him. He would not allow that. He would not allow her father, mother, and all the gods to know that she had begged this of him. That she had gone out into the night and called him to her, to claim her body and thereby her soul, her future, her everything as his. No, she would remain to the world what she had always been: the beautiful, virtuous, and innocent goddess of spring and flowers. Angry and hurt as he was in that moment, he would not allow his sweet love's name to be sullied and ruined. Better that the world believe as it likely already did. That he, the monster beneath the earth, had abducted the unsuspecting goddess while she was out picking flowers after dusk. It would do no worse to his reputation, not really. This would require him to once more betray her trust. He only hoped that over time she would come to see why he had acted as he did. That if she loved him as much as he believed she did, she would be able to forgive him one day.

With a heavy and troubled heart, Hades sat down again on his throne, not bothering to put his crown on. Instead, he held his head in one hand, his other upon his crown now in his lap. He knew he would never sleep, not with all the scenarios running through his mind of how his brother might take Persephone from him despite her eating the pomegranate. Just because he knew of no way did not mean one did not exist. He tried repeatedly to convince himself otherwise. But as the night drew on, he managed to feel no better.

As you can see, the honeymoon is officially over. And Hades isn't done giving Persephone reasons to be upset. Will she be able to forgive him? For my reviewer that wanted more angst, I hope this satisfied. :) Thank you for the continuing support and feel free to provide feedback! I really appreciate it.

10. Olympus

Thanks for the reviews, favs and follows you guys! I appreciate every one! Also, I am going to try to go to posting twice a week, probably on Wednesday and Sunday to put myself on a schedule, and because I am taking summer classes and have to manage all my work carefully. That being said, I am out of town this weekend but will try to post Sunday night. Have a great weekend everybody and enjoy!

A new day was dawning in the Upperworld as Hermes entered the throne room on Olympus. It was markedly different from the one he had last come from, as it was white and had pristine glow. Zeus sat at his great golden throne, a crown upon his head to match, his long grey beard making the youngest of the three look older and more deserving of the title king of the gods. Next to him on his right was Demeter, holding herself together but just barely. As Hermes neared the two, she could not wait.

“Well, do they come?” she demanded.

Hermes ignored her for a moment to bow to his king, and then turned to address her.

“My lady, I cannot say.”

“You cannot say?” repeated Zeus.

“No my king, lord Hades would not give an answer.” Hermes replied.

“This is not to be! He cannot refuse a summons from his king!” Demeter cried out, looking from one god to the other.

“So he was, displeased by the request?” Zeus continued probing his messenger.

“Amused more than anything my lord. Persephone however...” Hermes trailed off, not sure how to say it or if he should say it at all.

“My Persephone, you saw her?!” Demeter gasped.

“Yes, great lady, I did.” Hermes answered.

“Was she badly abused? What has he done to her?” Demeter continued, becoming frantic.

“Calm yourself,” Zeus commanded, but Demeter barely heard it as at that moment the golden doors of the throne room swung open to reveal the lord of the dead himself.

Silence. No one spoke or practically breathed as Hades strode towards the throne, dressed in a black tunic and matching himation, looking every bit his title. He came to stop a few steps before his brother and bowed as was expected, though on the inside Hades was seething at having been summoned like a child to be scolded for stealing another’s toy. But he hid that emotion well behind his much practiced expression of cold indifference.

As Hades rose his eyes fixed on Zeus. “Greetings, brother.” His deep baritone broke the potent silence.

“Brother,” Zeus inclined his head to Hades. “How good of you to come so quickly. We were afraid you weren’t coming at all.” He said looking to Hermes who shifted a little under his gaze.

“Have I not always done your bidding, little brother? Have I not always done as you commanded?” Hades returned, matter of fact but with great meaning that he knew Zeus recognized.

Zeus had mentally winced at *little brother*, but bowed his head slightly as he answered. “Always.”

Demeter, not being able to wait any longer and distraught that her daughter was not with present, practically yelled at Hades now.

“Where is she?! What have you done with her?! Were you not ordered to bring her with you?!”

“Silence!” Zeus thundered at her and she seemed to remember herself a little, though her eyes were glued to Hades for an answer and her chest was rising and falling quickly.

Hades barely acknowledged her. He did not answer to her, and would not.

Zeus sensed as much, and continued his questioning.

“Hades, I believe you have a certain someone in your possession... that you did not have rights to take.” He said carefully.

Hades’ eyes narrowed ever so slightly. “Oh? Did she belong to some other god? Was she betrothed?” he answered almost mockingly.

“She belongs to me! And she was never to be betrothed to anyone!” Demeter cried again and Zeus turned his body around to face her this time.

“You will silence yourself before my throne or you shall return to your barren fields!” He yelled and she immediately fell silent, tears welling in her eyes. She looked as though she were biting her tongue in half, but did not move to speak again. Hades thought that she looked much older than when he had seen her in that same room only months ago. She had driven herself mad and aged herself prematurely. He did not feel sorry for her.

Zeus, appearing satisfied that she would hold her silence, turned from Demeter and back to Hades.

“Brother, I would be inclined to let you keep your bride if she were anyone else, but, for the sake of the earth, and for the mortals whom you of all must know are plummeting towards extinction, I cannot allow Persephone to remain in the Underworld with you. The cost would be too great.”

Demeter was practically trembling from where she stood, infuriated by her former lover’s words that she now considered his greatest betrayal of all. And he was her father! Yet he would let her go to such a place and such a one as Hades if he could. She remained silent however, waiting to hear uttered the command for Persephone’s return. She practically held her breath.

Hades huffed, mostly under his breath, but Zeus caught it. A wry smile played on Hades' lips as he regarded Demeter and then met his brother's eyes again. "Persephone—my queen and consort— has tasted the fruit of my realm, and so cannot return to this one. It is a binding and undoable act, as you well know." He said smoothly and saw Zeus's eyes widen a bit. Next to him, Demeter began to sob.

"That cannot be!" she choked out. "She cannot be lost forever...." but it was less a question and more a lamentation.

Zeus did not hear Demeter, for he was silently considering Hades' words. This would not do. Demeter was beside herself and if faced with losing Persephone forever, would likely not have the strength to carry out her duties even if she were inclined to. He had promised her that he would bring their daughter from the land of the dead in exchange for her restoring the harvest and setting the world right again. He could not break his word, or let the earth die beneath them. But he was playing with ancient and powerful magic, and so must tread carefully.

"She tasted the fruit of your realm? What do you mean, specifically?" Zeus inquired, trying to find a way around the dilemma before him.

Hades laughed internally. Demeter would likely faint, if not throw herself on him in violence, if he were to truly and fully recount the story of what had happened to that pomegranate. He suppressed a wicked smile and answered simply, "She ate a pomegranate, *specifically*."

"But she did not eat the entire thing?" Zeus pressed him.

What was he getting at? Hades wondered to himself. "What does that matter?" he asked, growing impatient, and realizing too late that he had thus given Zeus the answer.

"So she didn't eat the entire thing. How much then?" he continued.

Hades bristled. He did not like this. Clearly Zeus had hit upon something, known or realized something that he had not. He wanted to say no more, but knew now that he had given so much away that his brother would be able to tell if he was lying. Zeus was good at that. As the king of a devious and deceptive collection of gods, it was a highly necessary skill.

"Half," Hades answered through gritted teeth and he could feel his face becoming hot with anger.

"Ahh. I believe then I see a solution that should suit the both of you." Zeus said, smiling triumphantly.

Demeter stopped her sobbing long enough to look up at Zeus with red eyes. Hades felt his hands balling into fists, almost involuntarily, the mere thought of some sort of compromise enflaming him.

"As Persephone only ate half of the pomegranate, she will remain in the Underworld for half of the year. The other half, she must return to the Upperworld to reside with her mother. Thus, both of you shall have her, no one of you for a greater amount of time than the other."

Zeus obviously seemed to think this was a marvelous and clever solution. The other two parties in the room however could not have been in greater disagreement with their king.

Hades made a low, growling noise as his pale face turned red with rage. Before he could lash out at this brother though Demeter screeched from her place beside the throne.

"I have to share her with that monster?! After he stole and raped her?! That is your solution?! You promised—"

"I have never raped her you sniveling, pathetic, wretched excuse for an immortal! I may have abducted her but I have never laid a hand on her in harm! I made her a queen! You would have kept her a child for the rest of eternity if you'd had your way!" Hades bellowed as he could endure no more from either of them.

"Better forever a child than ever your bedmate! She will never love you! You vile, hateful, despicable monster!" Demeter shot back, having forgotten the command to control herself.

"ENOUGH!" Zeus's voice shook the room like thunder itself. The two warring gods held their tongues and starred daggers into each other.

"This is a fitting arrangement, and as I am king, it is law. You, Demeter, forsook your most sacred duties and as such countless mortals went to the Underworld before their time. You think you should be rewarded for this?" He said sternly as he was angry now, tired of the petty back and forth that had been occurring between the two ancient gods.

"And you brother. Do you not think you should be reprimanded for stealing a virgin goddess? Simply picking her from the fields as though she were a flower herself, without asking my permission first? Especially given she is my daughter. Had you desired a bride, why did you not come to me? And you cannot tell me that you had no idea as to why so many mortals were passing into your realm so soon after taking Persephone as your wife. You are as guilty for the devastation on the Upperworld as she." Zeus said, jerking his head towards Demeter. "If Persephone had not eaten the fruit of your realm, I would command you to return her for good." Zeus finished hotly.

"And you would have to come down to the Underworld yourself to retrieve her." Hades' words were dangerous and his voice low. His blue eyes shown like ice and he trembled he was so overcome with fury.

"Do not challenge me Hades, you are among the most intelligent of our kind. You knew you would have to answer for this." Zeus's voice came just as dangerously. "And for that, you will return Persephone immediately. She will dwell with Demeter for the next six moons, only then may she return to you."

Hades felt as though he had been punched squarely in the gut. He felt as though the air had left his lungs and he couldn't think clearly for a moment. He knew he had heard his brother correctly, but tried to convince himself otherwise.

She was going to be taken from him. And immediately. Not in a few months, as she had not been with him six moons yet, but right now. This could not be. He had followed the ancient rules and rites. She was bound to him and his world. Yet, the king of the gods had just ordered her return to the Upperworld. He had completely forgotten Demeter was in the room until she broke the silence.

"Fine. But while she is with him, while she is gone from my side, I will allow nothing to grow upon the earth. I will mourn her every second she is in his realm." Demeter declared

and moved in front of Zeus's throne to bow and dismiss herself. As she walked past Hades she stopped and added hatefully, "I expect her by nightfall." And strode from the room.

Hades and Zeus regarded each other silently for a moment, each taking in the other's resolve and neither wanting to tempt the other any further. They generally held each other at arm's length, always endeavoring to keep peace between them. Hades had learned to control his anger and rage over the years, but Zeus knew that his brother had been a ruthless, mighty and blood thirsty warrior in his youth, and that the wild killer still lurked somewhere deep down inside him. He wanted in earnest for that part of him to remain dormant for the rest of his existence, unless he ever needed to call on him for defense.

Hades, while not afraid of his brother, knew that Zeus could likely do even worse than he had just done, and did not want to risk anything else where Persephone was concerned. He had known he would have to answer for this eventually. That he would likely even be punished. But he had never imagined it would be like this. This was the worst punishment Zeus could have possibly devised, save for parting them forever.

Zeus waited for Hades to say something. However, after another long moment, Hades turned and walked from the room. Zeus had expected him to say something, anything really, but not walk away silently. Somehow, that was the most frightening thing he could have done. For as Hades had told him with his eyes, he would find a way to repay Zeus for this. And he was going to have months to consider how while he waited for his queen to be returned to him. Zeus had not wanted this, but as he had said, Hades and Demeter had actions to answer for, and he could see of no better solution.

As he sat on his throne, Zeus wondered if he had truly heard the last of all this. Someone, he knew he had not.

In the royal bedchamber deep beneath the earth, Persephone was just waking after having spent what felt like hours crying herself to sleep. The preceding night had been the worst of her life. She had discovered that she was the cause of the many recent deaths among the mortals, that her mother was devastated in her absence, and that her husband had been lying to her.

The last thing she wanted to do was travel to Olympus and come before her father. She wanted to go back to sleep, only to wake and find the night before had been but a bad dream. She did not know what to make of Hades' actions. She was too upset and worried about her mother to attempt to understand what he had been thinking or put herself in his shoes, as she always tried to do—that is to see things from his perspective. She wished that he would do that with her sometimes.

While she was indeed no less angry with him this morning, her thoughts were largely on her mother. She had not thought about her enough, she reprimanded herself. She wondered if she would be at Olympus as well. How she would receive her after all of this. If she would blame her or Hades or both of them. She would tell her mother and father how she had begged this of Hades, how it was not his fault and of how desperately she loved him. Hopefully her mother could at least understand that much, for she knew she had once loved too.

Persephone looked to the other side of the bed. It was untouched as Hades had never come to it. She wondered where he was. She was surprised he had not come for her yet, but truly

she did not know how long she had slept. She did not feel well rested at all. Pushing herself up and out of bed, she went through their chambers to look for him. Passing from room to room, he was nowhere in sight. Becoming angrier by the second, Persephone sat out for the throne room, sure she would find him there. *Likely he slept there all night*, she thought. *Serves him right*.

But as Persephone entered the throne room, she noticed he was not there either. Becoming very irritated now, she turned to seek out Hecate. Hecate somehow always knew where their lord was. She knew a lot of things and Persephone was always astounded and almost frightened by the depth and range of her knowledge. The goddess had expanded her understanding of just about everything over the months that she had been in the Underworld. And for that Persephone was very thankful.

After a few moments of scouting all of the usual places, Persephone finally spotted Hecate coming from the garden. The goddess had a great knowledge of plants and was usually very active at night, so Persephone figured that Hecate was returning from another nocturnal venture of hers.

As she approached, Hecate greeted her warmly. "My queen, you are awake early to have been up so late." She said knowingly.

"Yes, yes I am. As is the same for my lord husband. Have you seen him?" Persephone asked, not having the patience this morning for pleasantries.

"I saw him, yes. He left for Olympus some time ago. Hermes came late last night to summon him, though I believe you saw the messenger god yourself." Hecate answered her queen casually, not knowing the impact and gravity of her words.

Persephone refused to believe her ears. She did not speak, but felt hot and angry tears forming in her eyes. He had lied to her again. He had betrayed her trust and gone without her. He was saying gods know what, and perhaps her mother was there too. So many painful thoughts ran through her mind as the realization of Hecate's words thoroughly sunk in. She blindly walked past the goddess, not hearing when she called to her, inquiring what was wrong. Persephone simply walked away from the palace and aimlessly into the grey wastes. Tears were flowing freely down her face now, and suddenly she was too hurt and overcome to have any more thoughts at all.

Thanks for the reviews, favs and follows everyone! I appreciate every one! Also, I am going to try to go to posting twice a week, probably on Wednesday's and Sundays to put myself on a schedule, and because I am taking summer semester classes and have to manage all my work carefully. That being said, I am out of town this weekend but will try to post Sunday night. Have a great weekend everybody and enjoy!

11. Farewell, My Love

After the events on Olympus, Hades had not wanted to return to his palace. It would mean facing the reality of everything he had done and would have to do. It would mean that he would have to face Persephone once more, having deceived her, but without being able to say that it had been for her own good. It had been in the sense that he took the blame for what had happened, but he had felt sure that he could keep her safely in his realm forever, and now he would have to tell her that he could not. He had failed her, and if he forced himself to be honest, he had lied to her.

What kind of husband was he that he could not even protect his own wife? That he could not keep her with him? His blood boiled at the mere thought of this brother. How many lovers had he taken? Immortal and mortal alike? Had he cared that they were virgins, married, or at times even unwilling? No, and he had never even loved. Hades did not believe he even could, or at least he was certain that he had never had anything like he and Persephone did.

Well, that was assuming they still did. Persephone was going to feel even more betrayed than she did last night. In her hurt and her anger, coupled with being so quickly returned to the Upperworld, Hades wondered if he would not lose her forever. They would have no time to reconcile, and she would remember all the things she loved and missed about her mother's home. The fields, the sun, the flowers that she loved so much and had been so long without. The chance to use her powers again, to grow things and create life as was her gift. Were those things enough to reclaim her heart from him? If they were, he knew it was his fault for causing her heart to ache and their to be separated in the first place. She most likely felt she could no longer trust him, and trust had been one of the main reasons she'd begged him to take her that night in Nysa. She had trusted him completely, believing that he would love her and care for her no matter what happened. He had ruined all of that now. The fates had given him one chance to love in his long and lonely life, and he had destroyed his brief happiness forever.

He had no idea how to tell her what he had done. She would not understand as she had not understood when he attempted to explain himself the night before. She was already furious at him, and when he brought her this news, she would turn from him forever.

Knowing he could put it off no longer, Hades returned to his palace. He walked slowly towards their chambers, wishing time would stop. As he entered their bedroom, he looked around but saw no sign of her. He did not even sense her near. Puzzled and growing even more anxious, he tried to quiet his mind and search for her that way, trying hard to feel her wherever she was. He did not believe her to be in doors after not feeling her presence anywhere in his palace, which was vast but she only kept to a few parts. Deciding that she must be outside, which should have occurred to him, he made his way back out of his palace.

Passing through the courtyard, he saw no one, dead or living. That suited him, he wanted to encounter no one except his wife. His mood made it impossible to be cordial at the moment, nor did he want any creature to behold the emotion that was becoming too much for him to control. These feelings, all of the feelings Persephone had kindled in him were brand

new and at times he knew not how to manage them. He hid behind a mask of indifference before all but his wife, whom he showed almost everything to. He had not shown her his insecurities or his worries, and now knew that had been a great mistake. If she could forgive him, he would never make that mistake again.

Hades caught sight of her. She was walking so slowly that she was barely walking at all. More wandering aimlessly, her head tilted down towards the ground but not really looking at anything. He had wondered if he would find her more sad or more angry, and she appeared so forlorn that he almost could have mistaken her for a shade. Her being sad was worse to him than her being angry. His heart bled at the thought of having wounded her so, and to make it worse he had no idea how to set it right.

He inhaled deeply and began to walk towards her. He wished she had been inside, where he could sit her down in their chambers and break it to her as gently as he could. As he neared her he could tell that she sensed him, yet she did not turn around to acknowledge him.

Persephone heard, and felt, Hades approaching. She had stopped and resumed crying several times since she had learned Hades departed without her. Her eyes had been dry, but now that he was so close she felt tears threatening her again. She did not turn. She did not want to look at him. She wanted him to know just how profoundly he had wounded her, and she knew that ignoring someone was worse than being cruel to them.

He was so close now that she heard his footfalls in the grass, stopping a few paces from her. She twirled an asphodel bloom in her fingers, studying it intently in attempt to focus on something enough so as not to give in to her emotions just yet. She was waiting for him to speak, and the passing of seconds was agonizing. Hades waited for another moment before he softly spoke her name.

“Persephone...” his baritone voice was timid and careful, not its usual booming and confident self.

She turned her head halfway towards him, not actually looking at him but enough to acknowledge she heard him. She looked back to the flower in her hands.

“Persephone, you must understand—”

“I understand well, Hades.” Persephone cut him off coldly. “You are incapable of being honest with me because you do not trust me or think me capable of making my own decisions. But even then...” she said turning around to look him in the eyes now “...you could have outright refused to take me to Olympus instead of deceiving me yet again! How am I supposed to trust you now?!”

Hades did not attempt to argue with her. He looked on her with a sorrowful expression and pain in his eyes. He had expected this sort of reaction, but it still hurt to see it playing out.

“I do trust you, my love. I simply do not trust others. And I love you so much, so completely and powerfully, that I want to protect you, from everything and in any way I can. My mistakes have been made only with that in mind. I have no more excuses for you, only the admission that this is all my fault.”

Hades did not want to argue anymore and decided to immediately launch into an apology and admission that he was completely to blame. Hopefully, that would appeal to her heart, if

she still loved him as much as she did that night he brought her down there.

Persephone silently took in his words. He heard her snuffle and knew she was crying. He tried to wait patiently, but her lack of response was killing him.

“Persephone?” he called gently and more quietly than before, pleading with her. “Can you forgive me?”

Persephone turned slowly to look him in the eyes, tears staining her face just as they had when he last saw her in his throne room. He thought he could actually feel his heart breaking as he witnessed her pain and knew he was about to cause much more.

Persephone looked at her husband saw the pain in his eyes. Last night they had been full of anger, pride, and offense. Now they were remorseful and miserable. And he had apologized, which surprised her a bit. Her husband was absolute, dominant, and confident. He could very easily be arrogant, though he generally was not with her. The look on his face now was so out of place on him that he practically looked like a different god. Her love’s distress and apparent depression were stabbing at her heart, and she felt at war with herself. She was still angry and still felt a little betrayed. But he knew he had been wrong, and he said he was sorry. She knew that had taken a lot for him, and felt herself slowly melting towards him.

Persephone let the flower fall to ground. Hades watched her, not moving, not breathing, as she closed the distance between them. She looked up into his icy eyes and saw their earnest sincerity. Bringing her arms up to lay around his neck, she answered “Of course I forgive you, Hades. I love you.”

She laid her head on his shoulder, nestling her face into his neck to rest it there and close her eyes. Hades exhaled the great breath he’d been holding and wrapped his arms around her to crush her body against his. He laid his head against hers and closed his eyes, savoring the feel of her body, the smell of her hair, the comfort he knew only in her arms.

Why could it not stay like this? He was about to lose her, perhaps irrevocably. If only he could stop time and hold her like this forever. He thought of the story of Baucis and Philemon who turned into trees, eternally intertwined. Tears threatened his eyes now, something that had never happened in his long, immortal life. He was trying to steady himself before he summoned the strength to tell her. He wondered if he would physically be able to make himself say the bitter and hateful words.

Persephone sensed something was wrong. She felt his heart beating quickly beneath his chest and his body was tense in their embrace. Not breaking away from him but tilting her head up to his, she saw his tell-tale eyes.

“My love, what is wrong?” she asked, concern covering her face.

He looked into her soft brown eyes, only an inch from her face. Quietly, he answered her.

“You must return to your mother.”

Persephone felt like he had plunged a blade into her stomach. The words, impossible though they seemed, hit her instantly. The pain in his eyes had told her before he spoke that what he said was true, and her only reaction was to try and force herself from his embrace.

He would not let her go, though. He held onto her with an iron grip, and though she pushed and shoved against him with all her might it felt like nothing more than the brush of butterfly wings against his solid chest.

“Let me go!” she cried as she fought him, tears coming anew and her voice punctuated with sobs. “Let go of me, Hades!”

He held onto her regardless, looking down at the agony and hurt on her face as she tried to escape his grasp. She was beginning to tire and became limper and limper in his arms. She balled her fists and brought them down on his chest, though he could tell she held herself at bay. The feel of them was dull against his powerful muscles but it cut his heart with searing pain.

Sobbing and whimpering, she finally tired to the point that she relinquished her attack on him, falling against his chest and sobbing loudly. He bent his head and leaned it on hers, letting his own tears fall down his face now.

Persephone felt his tears falling on her. As for herself, she felt as though the entire world had fallen on her. How could this be? He had said no one could take her from him, but that is exactly what was happening. How did he, the eldest of the three and second only in power to her father, have no way of preventing this?

She raised her head, with only the strength to whisper and asked, “How? Why?” through still streaming tears.

His eyes were bloodshot. Tears were collecting in his beard which was wet and glistening now. He slowly shook his head “Your mother has threatened the very existence of humanity in her grief; and your father is powerful enough to bend even the strictest laws of magic to his will.”

He was crying the entire time he spoke. Persephone vacillated between feeling furious at him and feeling as though she would die if separated from him. It was maddening.

“So we are to be parted forever?” she wept.

“Six months in the Upperworld, six months in the Underworld. For the rest of eternity” He answered simply.

Persephone sniffled, letting it sink in. “So, I can stay with you until I have been here six months, then return to my mother for six?”

Hades’ expression darkened even further. “No, my love. You must return to your mother tonight.” He said sorrowfully. It was as though every time he opened his mouth it was to hurt her further.

She looked at him, shattered and in disbelief. Shaking her head and crying even harder now, she demanded to know why.

“Why? Could they not let me simply remain until three more moons passed in the Upperworld? How is that not fair?! Are you not a king? Am I not your wife and queen?!” Persephone practically screamed at him.

Hades closed his eyes. He felt like a failure; as a god, as a man, as a king, but mostly as a husband.

Keeping them closed, he answered her. "Being robbed of you now is my punishment for abducting you."

Persephone felt anger flood her veins again, like boiling water had replaced her blood. "That is what you allowed them to believe?! You did not tell them the truth?" she implored him.

He did not answer her, only stared at her in undeniable guilt.

She pushed away from him and this time he let her go. "If you had taken me with you, if you had let me tell them all the truth, none of this would be happening Hades!" she cried in despair.

"What do you want me to do Persephone?! I have apologized, I know this is my fault, but I cannot defy the commands of your father, nor can I alter what has already been done!" he petitioned her but she would hear no more from him. Her heart could not bear it at the moment and she strode past him, angry tears wetting her face yet again. She sobbed loudly and freely as she made her way towards the palace.

Hades did not attempt to follow her. He only looked at his hands and balled them into fists at the feeling of helplessness that consumed him. He wanted to cast his brother and his former lover in the very depths of Tartarus. His chest heaved and despite his best efforts more tears fell down his face. He looked skyward, wishing the entire Upperworld would fall to destruction and devastation above him.

Some hours later, Persephone woke from a fitful nap. She lay crumpled in their bed where she had fallen asleep crying for the second time in the space of a few hours, having done so the night before as well. She was so angry at Hades; if he had not been so possessive of her that it blinded his judgment, none of this would have happened. If he had only trusted her, if he had only taken her with him to Olympus, she may have prevented this.

She remembered how she had loved his possessiveness, though. The way he held her hand, the way he grasped her in his arms and held her as though he needed her like he needed air. She knew in her heart that what he said was true; he had done all that he had because he loved her and wanted to secure her as his forever. Still, he had gone about that all wrong. She couldn't help but be angry at him, devastated as she was to be parted from him and as much in love with him as she was, which was as much as she had ever been.

The hours were passing and she knew the time was drawing near. She rose from the bed and began to make herself presentable. As she combed her hair, she regarded all of the jewels Hades had gifted her. She would not be taking them with her. She was not a queen in the Upperworld. Only when she was here, with her lord, would she dress as such. When she was with her mother, she would clothe herself simply, in black gowns and asphodels as her only adornments. She would mourn the loss of her lord while she walked the earth and was separated from him. She would make her mother and father see what a hollow victory they had wrought. If her mother would let nothing grow in her absence, she would make no flowers or anything at all grow while in the Upperworld. Damn what Hades had told them about her 'abduction.' She would show them how wrong they were about their love.

As she finished preparing herself, she heard Hades approaching cautiously. Turning to see him standing in the doorway, he looked far worse than she. Eyes still bloodshot, tired and

grave in appearance. He was reluctant to speak, and could only force himself to mumble, "It is time."

Persephone nodded and pulled a cloak over her black gown. She crossed the room and walked out of the door right past Hades. He shut his eyes and exhaled. Opening them just as quickly, he followed her out of the room. He kept a little bit of distance between them, not wanting to upset her further as she obviously did not want his company. This was not how he wanted them to part. Perhaps he had been right when he feared she would turn from him forever.

They strode out of the palace and towards the Styx where Charon waited to ferry them to the other side. During the journey, Persephone would not look in Hades' direction. She turned her back to him as she sat. He stood behind her and tried to burn the image of her into his mind. Her graceful features. Her long and wavy hair that fell nearly to her bottom down her back. Even so simply dressed, she looked every bit a queen. Beautiful and regal. His queen. No matter what happened, no matter how long they were parted, no matter if she stopped loving him entirely, she was his one and only queen.

As the ferry reached its destination, Persephone laid eyes on the Upperworld that she never thought to set foot on again. The sun was beginning to set, and she had forgotten how beautiful the sunsets had been there. Orange, yellow, purple and pink blazed across the sky.

Standing on the bank and waiting to escort her back to her mother was Hermes. She steeled herself, not wanting to break down again and in front of others. She wanted to at least appear like a queen.

As the ferry gently bumped into the bank, Persephone stood up. Hades had extended his hand to her and she took it without looking at him. He stepped out of the ferry first and helped Persephone out.

Hermes greeted them both. "My lord Hades," he bowed to him and then turned to Persephone. "My lady," he bowed to her as well. Hades had barely inclined his head but Persephone greeted him by name.

Turning to Hades to look at him finally, she bowed deeply to him but with a stoic expression. "My lord," she said evenly and turned to go with Hermes. Hades watched her with a heart that was splitting down the middle. He knew she had every right to be upset, but it destroyed him to see her leaving with such a curt goodbye.

Persephone felt the air leave her lungs as she began to walk away from her love. Angry as she had been, she felt it all fall away at the realization that this was it. They were parting and there was nothing either of them could do to stop it. She would not fall asleep in his embrace tonight, or tomorrow night, or the one after that. She would not wake to find herself still in his arms. She would not enjoy her dinners sitting next to him, she would not bid him chase her through the dark hallways when he was not on his throne, she could not kiss him whenever she had the urge. Tears welled in her eyes and she was amazed that she had any left. Suddenly overwhelmed, she turned to look back at him.

He was just as he had been when she turned, like a statue watching her go, no emotion betraying his face in the presence of others.

Persephone turned around to run back to him, throwing her arms around his neck and clutching him as though it were possible she would die without being in his arms. She wept loudly and unashamedly, her face in his neck. Hades wrapped his arms around her and brought his forehead down to lean on her shoulder.

“My love, my love....” He whispered into her hair.

“I can’t, I cannot—” she answered.

Hermes looked back at them, and thought at how cruel and nonsensical this all seemed. He then looked up at the setting sun, wondering how long he should let them carry on. By the order of Zeus, he had to have her home before nightfall.

Hades gently rocked her back and forth in his arms, relieved that she was embracing him and no longer angry with him. She sobbed loudly into his neck.

“Shhhhhh, my love.” He soothed her out loud, and then spoke to her mind as he had when he first ever spoke to her. *I will visit you my love, as I used to. Be not so sad now.*

She heard him and looked up into his eyes to acknowledge it. Locking eyes with each other, the one silently assured the other of their devotion. Regaining her composure, Persephone broke away from him and stepped backwards. Hades held onto her hand and kissed it gently before he let it go and she stepped away from him to again follow Hermes.

Hermes strode onward, intent on his mission. As Persephone followed him, she turned once to look upon her husband’s face again. He was still watching her. *Soon my love*, she heard him say. She turned back towards the horizon, smiling the smallest smile to herself.

Hades turned back towards the Styx and as he stepped into the ferry, Charon pretended not to see the tears in his dark lord’s eyes.

12. Mother

As Persephone followed Hermes, she felt a tiny bit better at the thought that her love would soon pay her a visit. It could not be soon enough. Tomorrow night, perhaps? She would have to be extra careful when evading her mother now, and likely that would be harder than ever. She would find a way though.

What she had not thought about at all since she learned she was going home was how she was going to receive her mother. Her mother would be overjoyed to see her, and she would be happy to see her too, but she could not pretend that she was not heartbroken at being separated from Hades. Mother was not going to understand. Persephone was not even sure how she felt about her mother at this moment. She felt guilty for her grief and neglect of the earth, but she also felt furious at the demand to have her back. She would try to reason with her mother, but she knew how her mother could be. Demeter was not going to understand how she could be so miserable in the Upperworld that she was born to and once loved. When she learned how much she loved Hades, how completely devoted to him she was, and-most of all-how she had begged him to take her, it was going to break her heart all over again.

Perhaps she should wait and tell her things over time, Persephone thought. But her own grief was likely to give her away rather quickly. Persephone sighed, thinking to herself what a great mess everything had become. Her life was so simple once, with only which flowers to grow where her greatest concern. She had been happy, but it was an ignorant happiness. Hades had shown her a whole new existence, and she could never go back now.

"We are almost there," Hermes said, having heard her sigh.

Persephone blushed. She had been so caught up in her emotions that she forgotten how Hermes had seen her last. She smiled in spite of it. It must have been quite a shocking scene for the messenger.

Looking around, Persephone noted that they were indeed close to her mother's homestead. She inhaled familiar scents and noted the landscape. Walking for a few more minutes, her old home came into view. A simple dwelling, the goddess of the harvest did not need a palace or grand furnishings. She belonged to nature, to the earth, and lived simply in accordance with it. Or at least she had.

Her mother was standing at the threshold, waiting. She noted the sun had almost disappeared behind the horizon, and was growing more and more anxious. Just then, she caught sight of them.

Demeter turned to see her and Persephone quickened her pace to go to her mother's arms. She had missed her, and would not upset her further by being angry with her just yet. Persephone saw her mother's face take her in as if she were very different than she remembered. Even then, Demeter silently rushed towards her daughter, tears in her eyes, and wrapped her arms around her. Persephone thought her mother looked very different too. Grey streaked her hair and her visage was worn and tired. She looked much older than Persephone

remembered, and a pang of guilt shot through her body. Demeter held her head to her and cried into her hair.

“My child....my precious child...” she quietly sobbed. Persephone embraced her mother and her familiar scent of wheat and earth. She simply let Demeter hold her, ignoring how irritated her use of ‘precious child’ made her.

Demeter finally drew back and looked her daughter over, taking in the differences she noted in her.

“You are unharmed my sweet one?” Demeter asked through her tears.

“Yes, mother. But you—you seem so different...” Persephone said gently.

Demeter smiled and shook her head. “I am fine. I am fine now. Everything is well and as it should be now.” At that, Hermes silently dismissed himself, having fulfilled his duty.

Persephone sighed inwardly. Her mother was going to make this so hard.

“Come, let’s get you out of that gown *he* put you in. You look like you are in mourning.” Demeter said taking her by the hand and leading her inside. Persephone rolled her eyes behind her mother’s back. The disgusted emphasis that she had placed on ‘he’ was unmistakable. She wouldn’t even say his name.

“Mother, I like this gown. I would prefer to continue wearing it.” Persephone answered.

Demeter turned around, looking at her in confusion.

“You don’t like black. You never have. And you are the goddess of spring and flowers, you will wear white as you always have.” Demeter said, her voice evident that she was puzzled by her daughter.

Persephone was trying to control herself, but she couldn’t help it. She had too soon been robbed of her lord and love to have enough sense about her.

“I am a wife now mother, not a virgin goddess. White would not suit me.” Persephone said evenly.

Demeter took that in, but her daughter’s expression was more telling than her words.

“Wife?” Demeter repeated. “Is that what he calls you?” Persephone could hear the venom rising in her mother’s voice.

“That is only one of many names he has for me. But yes, he calls me wife.” Persephone returned, becoming angry now herself.

“You were his prisoner! His possession! You were nothing more than that. Do not be so blind, my darling. Calling you wife does not justify his abduction of you.” Demeter tried to reason with Persephone. Perhaps he had brainwashed her, cast some sort of spell over her while she was down there to make her more compliant. Demeter was becoming furious at the thought of him bending her helpless child to his malevolent will.

Persephone felt her blood boiling. This was not the time, she tried to convince herself. She wanted to ardently profess her love for Hades, but she had been reunited with her mother for mere moments.

“He is not as terrible as you believe, mother.” Persephone censored her preferred response greatly.

Demeter’s face morphed into something that was a combination of devastation and rage.

“What has he done to you, to make you defend him so? He who snatched you from your fields and....and....took your innocence from you?!” Demeter had stumbled over how to characterize the loss of her virginity. She was so sickened by it and still had not completely made peace with it.

Before Persephone could answer her mother started again. “And why are you not happier to be returned to your home? I expected you would be as overjoyed to be returned to me as I am to have you back. But you are so solemn and composed, I wonder that you even wanted to come.” Demeter was angry but her voice was cracking, tears evident in her eyes again.

Well, there was no going back now, Persephone thought.

“I love him,” she said quietly, barely above a whisper.

Demeter said nothing. Her chest rose and fell rapidly, taking in what her daughter had said. The silence was so thick that Persephone practically felt that she could not breathe.

Shaking her head, Demeter spoke just as quietly, “You cannot mean that. He has tricked you....cast some spell over you. Perhaps had Eros himself prick you....”

“No.” Persephone answered loudly and firmly this time. “I have loved him from the moment I laid eyes on him in father’s throne room. And he loves me equally.” Tears were welling in Persephone’s eyes now at the thought of her lord and his devotion. She wished she had not argued with him so much in the last few hours, but spent them intertwined with him.

“Persephone—”

“I am sorry mother for leaving as I did. I have not the words to tell you how sorry I am that I caused you so much grief and heartache. It was not intentionally done. But you did not have to take it out on the mortals, for what have they done to deserve it? Had I known what transpired on the earth I would have returned to you of my own accord to reassure you—”

“But you thought not of me! Had you, you would not have left so hastily as you say you did. And as for my grief, you cannot possibly understand. You are not a mother, you know not what it is to lose your child and believe it gone forever. Whatever love you say he has for you is minuscule compared to mine! Not that I believe it love. Men are infatuated at their best and full of lust at their worst.” Demeter spat out her words, being overcome at the realization that her daughter had been a willing participant in her ‘abduction.’ She could barely believe what she had heard.

“Mother—”

“Say no more! I will not hear it!” Demeter cut her off cruelly and Persephone fell silent, seeing the futility in the argument.

Demeter turned and left the room, leaving Persephone to her own thoughts. Well, that went over grandly, she thought. It was going to be a very long six months. She sighed and made her way to her little room, so very different from the one she shared with Hades. Tired from her journey and emotionally exhausted, she lay down and hoped to soon be dreaming of her love.

In the Underworld, Hades was walking the dark corridors, carefully avoiding any thing or place that would remind him of Persephone. That was going to make sleeping particularly difficult, he thought. He knew not how he was supposed to sleep in the great bed they shared now that it was so empty. No more falling asleep with her nestled into the crook of his arm, her face in his neck and her hand gently laid on his chest. No more waking to the same, or waking her up with lingering kisses and tender lovemaking. He felt tears threatening him again and cursed himself. He was not supposed to cry. He feared that Charon saw his tears earlier, but if he did the old boatman had pretended not to.

It was late and he was so tired, mentally and emotionally. He knew he could not avoid their bedchamber forever. Walking towards it, he entered slowly. Looking around, it was strewn with signs of her. She had left with such short notice, her things were everywhere. Her jewels were laid out on her table as she had taken none of them with her. He had not expected her to. He remembered that her crown was finished now and that he had intended to give it to her the first chance he had. Her throne also was near completion, but he would not have it installed until she returned. It would be a much too potent reminder of what he had lost if every time he sat on his throne he had to look upon her empty one.

Hades walked towards the bed, garments strewn on the floor in his path. Her gown from the last night they had made love there lay at his feet. He had practically torn it off of her in his haste to be inside her. He bent to pick it up. Bringing it to his face, he inhaled it, taking in her scent. It washed over him, the smell of lilies and sunlight. He clamped his eyes shut, forbidding new tears to form.

Opening his eyes, he looked to the bed. He dropped the garment and let it fall again to the floor. He would not, could not sleep there until she returned. His palace had many rooms, he would have another bedchamber prepared to endure her absence.

Walking from the room, he cast one more look upon it, vowing not to set foot there again until she was in his arms again.

Thank you for all the reviews I received this week! I promise to give them a happy ending, but they obviously have a few storms to weather first. Also, I know I said a few chapters back that this was going to be about a 15 chapter story, but now it's looking more like 20 or so. I just keep adding stuff. :)

13. Under the Stars

It had been three days since Persephone had returned to the Upperworld. Her mother had begun to speak to her again after their argument that first night, though their relationship was strained to say the least. Still, the two of them were trying to make the best of the situation and fall back into some 'normal' routine. As Persephone had suspected, Demeter was very mindful of her daughter's whereabouts at all times, and for the past three nights, had stayed up much longer than she had used to, making it impossible for Persephone to sneak out undetected.

Persephone was growing restless and irritable without being able to see Hades. She had wanted to see him again as soon as he was out of sight when she was following Hermes the night she arrived. She was going to do it tonight, one way or another, she would have to see him.

She decided to pretend to turn in early, thinking perhaps her mother would feel it safe to fall asleep as well. She felt her mother had been in some silent competition with her as to who would fall asleep first, somehow suspecting that she meant to steal away under the cover of darkness.

But she would have to take the chance that her mother knew what she was trying to do. Shortly after the sunset, Persephone announced to her mother that she was tired and turning in for the night. Demeter's face looked a bit surprised, perhaps even skeptical, but she said nothing other than to bid her daughter a good night's sleep. Persephone then went to her tiny room and laid down to wait for her mother to do the same. Not too much time passed before she heard her mother go to her own room, and Persephone made sure to wait a while after that before she rose. She wanted to make sure that her mother was indeed asleep.

Carefully rising and slipping from her room, Persephone stole away from the house. She tip-toed at first, so her mother would not wake and hear her, but when she had gone a little distance she began to full out run. It felt so good, running through the fields, the cool night air and stars above her. She almost felt like a child again. That and the secrecy of what she was doing along with the promise of shortly seeing her love was absolutely exhilarating.

Before long she reached the clearing where they always met, their secret place in Nysa. Collapsing onto the ground with a pounding heart, she caressed the grass and earth beneath her as she had so many times before.

"Hades.....Hades my love..." she called to the depths below.

She felt the earth rumble gently and tried to control her breathing. She did not stand up but sat on her knees, waiting anxiously for him to appear. Barely another moment passed and the earth opened, her lord slowly ascending.

She leapt up into his arms before he could even extend them, colliding with his chest. Her eyes were closed as she clung tightly to him and she felt his powerful arms wrap around her.

Quickly drawing back, there was no time for words. She pulled his face to hers and they began assaulting each other with passionate, wet, and greedy kisses. They plundered each other's mouths, tongues dancing and sucking on each other's lips. They grabbed and pulled at hair and clawed at each other through their garments. After what Persephone felt was a long while, she broke the kiss, out of breath and dizzy. Hades steadied her with his arms securely around her waist while hers gripped his shoulders.

"Hades," she panted up at him, stroking his face.

"My darling love," he replied, resting his forehead against hers and looking down into her eyes.

Persephone looked back into his icy blues, and noticed something that should not be there. Sadness yes....but was that worry too?

"My love, what is it?" she asked.

He averted his eyes for a moment before he answered. He was reminding himself that he had vowed to tell her everything from now on, no matter how big, small, or inconsequential he may think it.

"It has been three days.....I thought you would have called to me before now." He said simply and with a note of hurt in his voice that Persephone could not miss.

"Hades," Persephone began perplexed. "My mother has not given me a moment's peace. She watches over me more diligently than even before. She practically refuses to sleep. Only tonight when I feigned falling asleep early did she take to her own chamber. I called to you as soon as I could." She said earnestly.

In truth, Hades had figured as much. But he could not help but fear losing her. Her silence the past three days and nights had been a torture, with him left to wonder what she was doing and feeling every waking moment of his day. It was silly to feel that way, but he could not help himself. He missed her so much, and if she remembered why she had once loved her home and past life he could not fault her for it. She had given up everything to be with him.

"Do you not know the depth of the love I bear for you, Hades?" Persephone was on the verge of becoming upset now and he made to stop her.

"No, no my love. I am only so forlorn without you, I have nothing to fill my days but thoughts of when I shall see you again." He said quickly and earnestly.

Her gaze softened at him. "My days are the same my love," she replied and kissed him sweetly on the lips, stroking and caressing his bearded cheeks with both hands now.

He leaned into her hands, closing his eyes and savoring the feel of her. He had thought to indulge in her touch for the rest of eternity, whenever he pleased. Now he knew he must cherish every single touch that she bestowed upon him, to hold him over until the next time.

Persephone's heart was melting at her love's pained expression. She knew he missed and loved her equally. She also knew that she was the only creature in existence that bore him any love at all. That must have made the sudden loss of her even more terrible. While she and her mother were at odds, they did love each other powerfully, and she had grown up loved and

cherished long before she even knew who Hades was. But he had had no such life. She would have to make up for that.

She reached up to take his cloak from around his neck. Stepping away, she spread it out over the grass.

“Lay down,” she said. Hades was pouting a bit but moved to do as she instructed. He sat down on his cloak and looked to his wife.

“All the way down love,” Persephone added and Hades laid out on his back, looking up at her with eyes that were still too sad for her liking. She remained standing and began to slowly unfasten her gown, letting it fall off her body and stepping out of it. Hades sighed at her perfect naked form and she moved to place one foot on either side of his waist and sat down on his hips. His hands came up to pull at her but she stopped him.

“No, my love. Let me make love to you tonight,” she said and took his hands in hers, lacing her fingers with his and bringing his palms to her face to press reverent kisses into them. Hades let out another great sigh and resolved to force himself to let her lead. He had no problem with her leading, only his desire for her made him impatient. It had been days since he’d had her, and he was used to having her multiple times a day. But, as his wife knew, coupling widely was not what his heart needed tonight. Tonight he needed to be made love to. He needed reassurance and tenderness. And Persephone was set on doing all the work.

She brought his hands slowly down her neck to cover her breasts, where she guided them to clutch and knead her. She pushed her bosom into his hands and his hands into her, tilting her head back and softly moaning with pleasure. Hades rolled the hardened nipples between his fingers and wanted desperately to take one in his mouth, but she remained upright and he reminded himself that she was dictating this time. She began to roll her hips forward in pleasure and Hades felt his cock straining against his tunic. He grunted and Persephone looked down at his face. Smiling, she asked,

“What is it, my love?”

“I want to be inside you,” came his reply, already sounding out of breath.

“Soon darling,” she answered and pushed his hands down from her breasts to settle on her hips.

Leaving his hands there, she began to caress herself. She ran her hands through her hair, letting it fall over her shoulders anew. She grabbed her breasts and played with her nipples. Pushing her bosom together and apart and toying with them for Hades to watch. His fingers were digging into her hips, so hard it caused Persephone to gasp. He didn’t even realize he was doing it, his attention was on her hands.

Her hands left her breasts and glided down to her groin. Leaning back a little, Persephone slipped one of her fingers in between her folds. She closed her eyes and exhaled softly as she did, being wet already with want for her husband that she had been cruelly denied these three days.

Hades growled beneath her and his grip on her hips was now painful. Persephone did not make to stop him though. She opened her eyes and brought her free hand down to lay on his chest.

“See what you do to me my love?” she whispered lowly and slipped an entire finger into herself, causing her back to arch.

“Persephone, please...” he choked out and Persephone could hear his restraint weakening. She had not been trying to tease him, only show him how much she needed and wanted him. She herself needing release, she reached behind her to adjust his tunic and free his manhood. Hard and throbbing, she wrapped her hand around its length at she freed it, causing Hades to buck into her hand.

Positioning herself, she sat down slowly on his cock, letting it part her and sink to the hilt. She sighed as it filled her and brought her hands down on his chest to steady herself as she rode him. Slow at first, building pace and setting the rhythm. Hades hands again found her hips to help guide her thrusts. As their pace quickened, Persephone tilted her head towards the stars and moaned her pleasure into the night. Hades was transfixed; her skin practically glowed in the moonlight. Her body undulating like that, her breasts rolling back and forth, her nipples still hard, her hands that had flown to her hair to grip and pull at it from the pleasure that was coursing through her body all had him in a trance.

As she seemed to be coming undone on top of him, he let one hand move to play with her clit while the other remained glued to her hip. This was met with a sharp moan and her eyes flung open to look into his. He pressed harder against the little nub of flesh and her pace became erratic, moan after moan tearing from her throat. Feeling her orgasm about to overtake her, Persephone tilted her head back towards the stars, and in between moans and gasps, spoke all his titles to the heavens.

“My king....

My lord.....

My master....

My husband...

My love.”

With that Hades exploded inside her, closing his eyes and expelling what felt like to her a river of hot liquid into her core. Her orgasm followed instantly, and she screamed his name so loud that it was likely heard on Olympus. She did not care. Let all creation know who her lord and love was.

Persephone might have cared a little had she known that just a little ways away, hidden from sight, Demeter looked on. She had heard her daughter slip from bed and had followed her silently out into the fields. She had watched until she could not bear it, but she had seen what she needed to. How it was she that ran to his arms, that is was she that seduced him, riding him like some wanton whore. He had all but laid there, doing as she bid him.

She never could have imagined it, her little innocent a seductress. Had she seduced Hades from the beginning? Had she begged him to make her his queen? She was suddenly far less angry with Hades, more indifferent to him now. Men were wolves, they had not the power to refuse a lamb when it begged so prettily to be slaughtered. As Demeter walked back towards her home, hot and angry tears slipped down her cheeks. She had not the heart to do anything

about what she had seen at the moment. She would let Persephone have him tonight and deal with her in the morning.

Falling forward onto her husband, Persephone rested on his chest. Hades brought the robe around them and they laid together, steadying their breaths and regaining composure for some time. Persephone nestled into the space between his neck and shoulder and Hades held her tight. They lay silently so for a while, both knowing they needed to part but neither having enough will to tear away from the other.

Persephone listened to Hades heart beating and pressed a kiss over it. She thought of how she had expected to spend every night of her life falling asleep this way, listening to the gentle thud of her love's heartbeat. The knowledge that she could not do so made tears well in his eyes. She tried to fight them back, and Hades felt her tense.

"Darling, what is it?" he asked, but he knew well what it was.

Persephone raised up slowly to hover over his face, the tears falling and glistening in the moonlight on her face now.

Hades knitted his brow. "My love, do not," He whispered and kissed the tears from her face one by one.

Persephone's voice broke "Oh Hades. Don't go." She whispered but knew it was a plea in spoken in vain.

"You know that I must. Imagine if your mother found us like this." He said but wanted to stay as much as she wanted him to. Moving to get up, Persephone let him, sitting on his cloak and looking up at him mournfully.

Hades reached down and grabbed the gown Persephone has discarded some time ago and held it out for her.

"As much as I enjoy your naked body, I am about to depart and will not leave you so that someone else might see what is mine. Come," Hades said and Persephone sadly walked towards him and allowed him to help her dress.

When she was decent again, she retrieved his cloak to fasten it about his shoulders. Hades pulled her into his arms for one last embrace. They stood silently indulging in the safety and completeness that they found only in each other's arms.

"The night is half gone my love, you must return to your mother before she realizes you've slipped away." Hades said and Persephone nodded, knowing he was right. They shared one last kiss, deep and full of passion, before they broke away from each other slowly. Hades backed away, still holding her hand that she extended towards him, until he backed so far that his fingertips grazed hers as they parted. Persephone gulped and fought back new tears.

His eyes hadn't left hers. "Call to me when it is safe again, my love," he whispered into the night and disappeared as she answered him.

"I will." She whispered to the darkness.

Letting a single tear fall down her face, Persephone turned and began to walk back towards her mother's home. Sadness already seeping into her bones, she walked slowly. She thought she felt a little unsettled. She was dizzy and her stomach felt a little strange but then she

remembered she had not eaten in a very long while. Dismissing the feeling, she thought only of her bed and the brief bit of peace that sleep would grant her now that she was parted from her love again.

14. Why Can't I Love You Both?

So I am updating a little earlier than usual maybe, but I have a ton of homework and papers due this week so I am not sure when I will get another chapter up, plus this is a shorter one anyway. Also, things are about to get a bit more dramatic and I want to move things along to make it a bit more interesting for you guys. :)

Back in the Underworld, Hades was a bit tired but not nearly sated. He easily could have had Persephone two or three more times as far as his stamina was concerned, but they had needed the comfort of each other's arms more than another orgasm that night.

That was the first time they had mated in the Upperworld, and Hades wondered if he had impregnated his bride. Nothing about it had felt different to him, but likely it wouldn't. He was surprised that she had not mentioned conceiving, as she had talked of little else before she was forced to return to her mother. But they had been so desperate to just behold each other, perhaps it had not crossed her mind in her overwhelming desire to simply see him again. That had definitely been the case for him. He had not thought about babies at all, he had only thought of her and his absolute need to be with her. To hold her, smell her, touch her and know that she was real and still loved him as much as he did her. The question of if they had conceived was a secondary one that had only just occurred to him.

He thought it would be a good thing that she conceive quickly, if she had not already. That way, she would be sure to give birth in his realm when she returned. The last thing he wanted was his child being born in the Upperworld where Zeus or Demeter would have dominion over it. He wanted it birthed here, with him by Persephone's side as it happened. He knew nothing about birthing little gods, hopefully Hecate did.

Hades tried to imagine Persephone pregnant but found it difficult to picture his slender queen with a big, swollen belly. He smiled at the thought though. Hopefully, when she returned in six moons time, she would be round with his child. It would make her happy, and that was enough to make him want it too. He would allow it to leave his realm only once, while still being young and in need of its mother's milk, but after that first sojourn he would never allow it to leave his realm again until it was fully grown and well in command of its own powers. Persephone would likely run mad over this, but he would deal with that when he had to.

Finally reaching his temporary sleeping quarters, Hades pulled off his tunic, kicked off his sandals, and collapsed naked into the bed. The trip to and from the Upperworld had tired him, and being reassured of his love's devotion, he fell into a deep sleep.

Far above where Hades slept, Persephone was slowly striding towards her mother's dwelling. The night was more than half gone now and she feared she would sleep late once she found her bed. Rubbing her stomach, she noted that she still felt strange. She could not properly characterize it, she just felt different. She wondered if she had conceived, since they had finally coupled in the Upperworld, in fields as fertile as any in creation. She thought of

how her body would change, her belly distending and eventually being able to feel the babe move inside her. She could not wait to feel their little one growing and kicking in her. That would make the time in the Upperworld much easier to bear if it was with the knowledge that she had a little miniature of Hades in her womb. She smiled broadly at the thought.

But she wouldn't feel it immediately, she thought. That was not possible. If she were indeed with child, she likely wouldn't know it for a few weeks. And she was not sure how long it would be before she began to show. *That* would send her mother reeling, she thought.

But if they conceived quickly, which by all accounts they should if Hades visited her as often as she hoped, that would be for the best. That would mean she would be five to six months pregnant when she returned to him, which meant the child would surely be born in his realm. She didn't want to give birth anywhere but there, where their child would be safe under its father's rule. While they had never discussed it, she was sure Hades felt the same. She knew it likely that he would never let the child leave his realm, which distressed her a bit because she might only have three moons with her baby before she had to return to her mother. Surely while it was tiny and still feeding from her breast he would let her take the babe with her... but she was unsure.

Persephone sighed heavily. *Why did everything have to be so difficult?* she wondered, frustrated. This time last week she was in bed with her lord, sated and tangled in him with the promise of every night to come being the same. Now, she was walking the fields of the Upperworld, in the dark, and alone.

She saw her mother's home come into view. Making sure to be quiet, she looked for any sign that her mother was awake. Seeing none, she crept in and to her room. As she entered, she stopped suddenly.

Demeter was kneeling by her bed, one of Persephone's old dolls in her hand. She looked as one kneeling before a grave, silent, unmoving, and grief stricken. Persephone approached quietly and stood a little behind her, not wanting to disturb or startle her. She could tell that she was upset, and didn't want to make her more so.

Demeter sensed her daughter's presence. She remained silent for a moment, waiting to see if she would begin begging anew for the god beneath their feet. When she said nothing, Demeter spoke.

"You needn't plead for him anymore." She said evenly and without looking at her.

"Mother..." Persephone did not understand.

"I saw you with him tonight." Demeter cut her off.

Persephone's heart sank to the bottom of her stomach. She had been very angry with her mother, but she did not wish her to be hurt as she knew that sight must have hurt her.

"Oh mother—" Persephone began but Demeter silenced her.

"You are lost to me. I know that now." She rose and turned to face her daughter. "I'd foolishly thought that he'd stolen you from me, but now I know you ran to his arms willingly. That you invite his....defilement of your body as willingly as he imparts it."

She spat the last half of that sentence at Persephone who flinched at the venom in her mother's voice. She had never heard her speak so, did not know she was capable of it, and it wounded her down to her core. Persephone had argued and pleaded for Hades so much that she had nothing new to say, and it appeared that she had won, though not in the manner she had hoped. She had wanted her mother to see how much she loved Hades, how much she loved the life he had given her, and to be happy that she was so happy. She wanted to have her mother back. But now she saw that she could not have both Hades and her mother. She would have to choose.

Forcing back tears she was unwilling to cry in the face of her mother's coldness, Persephone replied, "That is not how it is mother, you judge us both much too harshly."

"I knew your consort long before you were ever thought of, and I judge him as he deserves. One day you will see him as he truly is, as all men are." Demeter replied coldly.

"Their pretty words and soft caresses are but for a moment. They do not love as we do. Their love lasts the blink of an eye, while yours may last the ages. He will turn from you, as they all do. And then I am all you will have left, though you would choose him over me now." Demeter continued.

"You think that because you compare Hades to father, but he is nothing like him, mother. No one would imagine what he is really like..." Persephone insisted; here she was pleading for him again. But she could not help herself.

"All maids think that when their lords first take them! He worships you now, I know. But it will not always be so. And the least you could do is stop coupling with him in the Upperworld! What if you become with child?!"

"I want nothing more than to carry his child! To have his child, our perfect child born of our perfect love for one another.....How could I not want that with all my soul?!" Persephone began to yell though she had promised herself that she was done yelling at her mother.

Demeter rose up to stand in front of Persephone. "And what if it's a boy? A boy that looks just like him and reminds you every day of what he has done to you once he has cast you aside?!"

"Is that what I have been to you, mother? A constant reminder of father's betrayal?" Persephone accused.

Demeter breathed deeply and seemed to calm herself a bit. Shaking her head, she answered, "No. No... you are my greatest creation, and the best thing I ever did. And you were the only thing I loved and could call my own, until now." Demeter said with a single tear running down her face.

"Don't make me choose between the two of you mother, please. Why can't I love you both?" Persephone almost whispered now.

"You do have both of us. Because while you may wish to spend every day and night for the rest of eternity with him I have you for half of those days and nights. I will not let you go, Persephone. One day, when he turns his affections elsewhere, you will be glad you have me to escape to."

Demeter was about to walk from the room, Persephone glued to the spot, chest heaving silently and eyes welling with hot and ireful tears, when she remembered something.

“Oh, and you will cease these midnight rendezvous with him. You did not sneak away from him to pay me visits when I was scouring the earth for any sign of you, mourning you as lost forever. He will wait his turn as must do.”

Persephone went from hurt to furious in the space of a second. Turning on her heels she tore past her mother and was out of the house, ignoring her cries after her. She wanted to be as far away from there as possible. Charging back out into the night, she made to put as much distance between her and that place as she could at the moment.

Persephone was so incensed and determined on putting space between her and Demeter, she did not even notice the slight bulge pressing against her gown.

15. An Unexpected Arrival

Persephone angrily marched in the opposite direction of her mother's home. She wanted to be as far away from there as she could get. She thought she would visit one of her old shrines and sleep there, as she had done so many times before. There was not much night left, but she needed to be alone. She needed to cool off and contemplate how she was going to be able to survive the next six moons with her mother like this. She was also going to have to find more creative ways to see Hades and evade her mother's prying eyes. She would not go without him for six moons, she could not even if she would not.

Why did she have to choose between her mother and her husband? She loved them both so much, and she knew that they both loved her just as much. But they could both be so stubborn, it was like being caught between two equally powerful and destructive forces of nature, both formidable and unyielding. But if she did have to choose, there was no doubt in her mind what that decision must be. Demeter had had her for her entire life. She had seen her into adulthood but could not recognize that she was an adult. Truly, Persephone thought that she would have been happy to spend her immortal life in the Upperworld, tending to the fields and the harvests with her mother, never knowing what being a woman and a wife was like. But Hades had opened her eyes to all of these things, and she now could not imagine being so naive and deprived. There was much less certainty in this life to be sure; he could stop loving her, cast her aside as her mother had warned. But it was worth the risk. Hades was worth every risk to her.

Contemplating these things and wishing desperately that she was far beneath the ground she tread, Persephone suddenly felt a discomfort in her abdomen. She slowed her pace and placed her hand low on her stomach. Taken completely off guard, she stopped abruptly. She felt her abdomen bulging slightly under her gown and her breath hitched in her throat.

Concentrating, she felt the tiny aura of life within her. It was faint, but it was there. It felt the way buds felt to her when she touched them and bid them gently open. The faint and fragile pulsation of life that was inside them.

She marveled at the feeling, not believing what she felt. Her heart began to race. Persephone rubbed her hand across her stomach, feeling the contours of it as it was no longer flat.

This can't be happening, she thought. It's just not possible.

But it was. She thought back to Hecate's words. *You are as fertile as any goddess who ever drew breath, more so likely.*

Was she so fertile that she could bring forth life immediately? She was goddess of spring and flowers, she bid things to grow and erupt into life in an instant, with the mere flick of her wrist or touch of her fingers. Was it so hard to believe that she didn't need nine moons to bring a baby god into the world? She thought of how her sister, Athena, had been born fully grown and armed. Stranger things had happened.

The discomfort she felt increased and as she looked down at her stomach it began to grow before her eyes. Slowly, it rounded and protruded from her body. She was breathing hard, both scared and excited. She had wanted a baby so badly, and she was about to get one. *Be careful what you wish for*, she had heard that adage among the mortals and it came to mind now as she was swelling, alone and unable to summon Hades to her side.

She wanted to, more than anything, to call to him. She wanted him by her side when she brought their little one into the world, and she wanted to do so in the Underworld. If she called to him now, he would take her back there, so that the baby would be safe in his realm under his protection and rule. That was if he could even take her back. She knew it was likely, due to her father's order, that Hades would not have the ability to take her home now. If he did and defied her father then what horrible consequences would come from that? She could not risk it, as much as she wanted to. The consequences from Hades taking her the first time had resulted in them being separated for half a year for the rest of eternity. She shuddered to think what judgment her father would bring down on them a second time.

Growing more and more afraid as her belly expanded, Persephone knew she had no other choice but to turn back towards her mother's home. It was not a short distance now, and she feared she would not make it. She also feared her mother's reaction to the sight of her swelling with her enemy's baby. But she loved her, and knew she would help her deliver. It was her own grandchild after all.

Persephone tried to walk quickly, but her increasing size and the equally increasing pain was making it more and more difficult to move. She held the bottom of her belly with one hand and laid the other on top of it. After another moment, she could feel the baby actually moving inside of her. The sensation was incredible, she wished so much that she was in a position where she could have enjoyed it.

Sighing and with labored breaths, she tried to force herself onward, but she was all but stumbling forward now. She felt her breasts growing and straining against the fabric of her gown, which was now so taut over her belly that she could feel the threads of it separating. Fear and panic gripped her heart as she realized she was only half way home. Holding her stomach to her as best she could, she tried not to look at it but look straight ahead. It was becoming too big now, she thought. She whimpered in fear and tried to be strong, but as a searing bolt of pain took her lower half, she doubled over onto the ground with a cry.

Still clutching her stomach, she wailed in pain. "No... no.... Not yet...." was all she could say, though she knew not to whom she spoke.

She cried out again as another wave of pain hit her, each one worse than the one before. She fell back onto the ground, breathing hard and sweating. She tried not to cry, but she was so scared and alone now, she could not help it.

"Mother..." she whimpered, but could not call out. She did not have the strength, and whenever she tried the pain would take her voice from her.

The skin of her belly felt as though it was tightening and her back hurt now too. Suddenly, pain ever greater than what had already beset her consumed her lower body. She felt as though she was splitting apart, and all she could do was cry out into the night. It was worse than when she and Hades had first coupled, and she had thought that bad. This was so terrible it made her question if she were truly deathless.

Persephone dug her fingers into the earth, grasping at blades of grass and dirt as she tried to brace herself against the pain. Sweat and tears were rolling down her face. She thought to actually die at any moment as wave after wave of pain tore through her. She squeezed her eyes shut and tried not to scream, choking on her cries and trying to steady her breath but the pain would not give her a chance. Finally, it abruptly subsided and she heard the soft cries of a baby pierce the night.

Panting and with a thousand emotions flooding her heart, Persephone tried to force her tired and aching body up enough to reach for it. It took every ounce of energy she had left, but she forced herself up on her elbows and reached between her legs.

There, lying on the grass and crying softly was a perfect little baby girl. Persephone wept like a fool at the sight of her. Grabbing her gently and lifting her up, Persephone pressed the newborn into her chest. Hades' bright blue eyes stared up at her. She was mesmerized by the sight and feel of her little one, and in an instant was already madly in love. Persephone forgot her terrible pain that was but a moment gone. As she brought her arms tighter around the tiny goddess, she was thrown backwards on the grass again by the force and unexpected jolt of an even greater pain than before.

Persephone wailed into the darkness, but still clutched her baby to her chest protectively. This time it was worse. If she had thought it unbearable before, this was absolute torture. The baby in her arms began to cry louder, unsettled by what was happening. Persephone held onto it despite the pain, but could not help herself from crying out. It was too all consuming and terrible. She felt consciousness threatening to leave her, and part of her welcomed it if it meant an end to this agony. But her baby... she could not leave her baby, she thought.

Persephone screamed one more time as the sensation of being split apart took her again, and as it faded, she faintly heard more cries join those of the baby in her arms. She did not have time to register what had happened though. As Persephone passed from consciousness, she barely whispered his name, unable to stop herself now.

“Hades....”

Yes, I know their daughters were not twins. But I was so caught up in the idea of Persephone being so fertile and able to bring about life that a multiple birth seemed reasonable to me. And she wants Hades' children so badly, I wanted to give her more than just one. :) Too bad Hades has no idea.....

16. Questions

Hades tossed and turned in his new bed, his dreams plagued with nightmares. That was so rare for him, especially after his love had come into his life. He saw flashes of things, brief pictures in his mind of Persephone in the world above. She was writhing in pain. The moon was overhead. Fields that he did not recognize. The smell of blood. She barely whimpering his name.... And flowers.....so many flowers.....

Hades' eyes shot open. He was panting, sweat on his brow. Sitting up in bed, he made himself replay the scenes he had beheld in his dream before he could forget them. They had been so vivid, so real. Had he only dreamed it? The quiet utterance of his name? Or had she truly called to him? Was she in danger? Had something beset her after he disappeared earlier that night?

So many questions rushed his groggy mind. He mentally kicked himself for not seeing her home safely. He should have remained with her, seen her safely back to her mother's dwelling before he took his leave. But he had never done that before, so the thought had not occurred to him. The fields surrounding her mother's home were safe and free of any natural predators and he had never before worried for her when they parted after their secret meetings under the stars.

Perhaps it had been no natural predator at all, but someone who beset her. Had someone overtaken her? Who would dare risk his wrath? It was known by all now, mortal and immortal alike, that she was his queen. Perhaps her mother... had she seen them? Had she witnessed their intimate embrace? That would have been too much for the already beleaguered goddess, Hades thought. Had Demeter taken her anger and grief out on his poor beloved?

The smell of blood and her pain was the most upsetting to him. It made him fear rape. The repulsive and hateful thought would not let go of his mind once he thought it, but any creature that would dare to do so must have known that it would not see another sunrise. He was driving himself mad with questions. It was likely that she was fine, and he simply troubled by her absence, as he had been since she'd left. Still, he had to be sure.

Rising from bed, he clothed himself with haste. Striding quickly to his arms room which lay not far from their bedchambers, he approached the pedestal where sat an object he had not touched for many centuries.

The helm of darkness. He had not had any real need to be invisible for some time. Dawn was already breaking in the Upperworld, and he would need to pass unseen as he ensured that his queen was safely accounted for. Retrieving the helm, Hades turned and hastily made to leave his palace for the realm of the living once more, having only departed it a short time ago. She is fine, he told himself. He would just lay eyes on her to make sure and ease his soul and then return to sleep a bit more. He knew not when Persephone would be able to call to him again and he would not be able to wait anyway. He had to know that she was alright.

As Apollo drove his chariot across the early morning sky, he noticed below him in Nysa something he had not seen before. Vast meadows that stretched far and wide, filled with crocus, lilies, larkspurs, roses, violets and iris blooms. They had certainly not been there the morning before. He wondered that Persephone had not grown them upon her return. As he cast his eyes over it though, he noticed at the epicenter of the vast meadow something he would never have expected to see, and he saw many things.

Not very far away, Demeter stepped out of her dwelling, surveying the horizon as the sun still climbed into the sky. She saw no signs of her daughter who had stormed off in a huff only a few hours before. She sighed with a heavy heart. She was so tired of arguing with Persephone, and that was essentially all they had done since she had returned to the world of the living.

She knew, in her heart, that she should let Persephone return to her husband if this was to be the way of things, seeing how miserable she was parted from him and not being the child she remembered at all. Not to mention the fact that Persephone was obviously going to continue seeing Hades, as she had shockingly witnessed but a little while ago.

Demeter tried to burn the image from her mind. Her once innocent little daughter mating with her older brother. It turned her stomach, though as she had noted earlier, she was no longer angry with Hades as she had been. She had not always hated him, either. When she first arrived in their father's stomach, it was Hades who kept them strong and calm and together. And when they were freed it was he who fought the bravest and fiercest of all in the Titanomachy. But he had been so bitter and enraged when he drew the lot of the Underworld. He turned from them all and closed in on himself, almost abandoning Olympus entirely, to do fates knew what down there for centuries. Stewing and plotting, they had all thought. He did not help matters with his dark demeanor and antisocial behaviors. The mortals had come to fear the very utterance of his name, and in time so had some of the gods. They all knew what lay in the depths of Tartarus, what he held dominion over. No one wanted to cross or anger him, for fear that he would forget what he had fought for all those years ago and let their world fall to ruin. Or, perhaps attempt to take it all for himself. Even Zeus, king of all the gods, harbored some fear for him, though he would not show it publically or admit it to anyone but himself.

Strange, Demeter thought, that what Hades would want, of all the things in the Upperworld and beyond, would be her daughter. How had her child, a minor flower goddess, won over such a one so completely? She had watched him comply to her every command last night. He looked utterly at her mercy there on his back. Demeter shook herself from the image once more and realized that the battle for Persephone's heart and mind had already been fought and won, and she was not the victor. Still, she could not let her go. Having her daughter for a few months and different than she remembered was better than never seeing her again. She was all she had that was precious in the world. Demeter felt that she would come around eventually too, once she made peace with the new arrangement of her life. It would just take her some time, Demeter told herself hopefully.

Scanning the horizon once more and seeing nothing, she told herself that Persephone must have fallen asleep in one of her shrines as she so often used to. Resigning herself to wait and trying not to worry, she turned to go back inside, believing it best now to let Persephone return in her own time.

Hades arrived in the Upperworld, coming to the spot where they always met. He looked around but saw no sign of her. The fields in his dream were not familiar to him, he had never met her there but they could be close. They had appeared similar to these anyway and she could not have gone far. He decided after scanning the horizon to make his way to her home, hoping to find her there safe under her mother's constant observation.

He traced what he thought would have been her steps from the night before. He tried to reassure himself that there was nothing to be concerned about, but there was a feeling in his gut that he could not ignore. Not until he saw that she was indeed fine would he rest.

As he approached Demeter's small dwelling, he reached out with his mind and his heart, but he did not sense her near. Thankful for his invisibility, he waited until he saw Demeter. He carefully avoided her, moving about the small space quickly, seeing that Persephone was not there. He exited quickly, afraid that the goddess might somehow sense him there. He noted that Demeter had worn a sad and agitated expression. She should be happy and pleased at her victory in having Persephone back. This puzzled him, and worried him further.

Walking in another direction, he stretched out his mind and all of his senses for some sign of her. Her scent of lilies and sunlight. Anything to tell him where she was. Growing frustrated and more and more afraid, he continued his search of the fields surrounding her mother's home.

A few hours passed. High above the mortal world, Persephone lay in a soft, plush bed in one of her father's rooms, still unconscious. Her two baby girls lay not far from her in a crib made for two. They were sleeping now, Eileithyia having been summoned to care all three of them. Apollo looked on silently from the doorway, studying the three goddesses intently. He wondered that he had made the right decision in bringing them here, but they had been all alone and seemingly abandoned when he had spotted them from his chariot. Had Demeter been so angry at Persephone for being pregnant with Hades' offspring that she renounced her and sent her on her way? That seemed unlikely, but the goddess had been so grief stricken and out of her mind lately that he put nothing past her.

The more intriguing question to Apollo however was where had Hades been in all of this? He must have been near not long ago, for Persephone had not been with child when she returned from the Underworld. Hermes would have told Zeus. And the birth of two new goddesses, the children of the eldest of the three and the grandchildren of the king of gods was no small matter. He could not have just left them there, he told himself. He had done the right thing. But still, he had a feeling of foreboding about all of this. He knew not why or what he thought it was, he only knew he could not deny the feeling.

Turning from the doorway, Apollo walked towards his father's throne room. Zeus was there, sitting on his throne, his hand massaging his brow. Apollo looked on, having brought him the news along with the three goddesses that now vexed him so.

Apollo broke the silence, musing over one of many questions that lay before them. "The meadows of flowers are very strange... Perhaps she grew them so someone would find her? Perhaps her mother has forsaken her? Angry that she was with his child?" He asked Zeus.

Zeus shook his head. “No, no Demeter would never. She treasures Persephone above all things. She let the earth die in her absence, remember?” Zeus responded. “And the flowers are not so strange, likely her blood and fluids from childbirth grew them as she lay there, nature heralding the birth of her babies... but those are the least of the questions that this presents us with.”

“She was abandoned there in the field. She must have given birth alone. Not to forget, she was not pregnant when she arrived here.”

“No, I haven’t forgotten that. But I can’t imagine that Hades would come up there, impregnate her and then leave her to her labor.” Zeus mused.

“No, he would want the children with him. Perhaps he will come for them?” Apollo asked.

“He may, but I have already ruled in the matter of his bride. I cannot see parting Persephone and her babes, they are too young. They may return to Hades with her when she returns in six moons.”

Apollo sighed. “Hades is likely to be enraged.”

Zeus rolled his eyes. “He will simply have to be enraged.” He answered, sounding as if he was growing agitated. Truly he was, with the entire great feud that had erupted over Persephone in the first place. It had never been a thing to him to take a lover, or to lay with whomever he chose when he chose to do so. That all of this death, devastation, and drama had erupted over his brother taking a minor goddess for a bride was beyond his comprehension.

Apollo’s expression darkened. “Father, forgive me, but perhaps it is not wise to provoke him so. He has powerful and terrible forces at his command, and he watches over Tartarus where —”

“I know well what he does and what he commands.” Zeus cut him off with a tone that told Apollo that he did not need to be lectured in the matter.

“I am king of the gods, and my word is final. Unless....”

“Unless?” Apollo raised his eyebrows.

“He and Demeter can come to some agreement. Which we know they cannot.”

Apollo furrowed his brow. “Perhaps, Hades does not even know he is a father yet?”

“Perhaps,” Zeus agreed. “I will have Hermes visit him with congratulations. That is once Persephone has awakened and we can assure him that she is well. The last thing I need is him storming up here demanding to see her, or even to take the three of them back to his realm.”

Apollo shifted uneasily. He could not openly and blatantly disagree with his father, but he knew this was a mistake.

After hours of walking, Hades finally came to the vast meadow of flowers. He was practically distraught with fear at being unable to find his wife, and had begun to call out her name. There had been no answer. And this meadow, it would look like the one from his dream

were it not covered in flowers. Flowers....there had been so many flowers in his dream as well.....

He reached down and ran his hands through them, inhaling her scent. She had been here. He could smell her very essence. His breathing became ragged and his heart sped up. He walked faster through the meadow, going deeper and deeper into the flowers and taking in her scent that was becoming stronger and stronger. He stumbled into the center, seeing the outline and shape of her body where she must have laid. He took in the smell of her blood, which he then saw dried on some of the flowers.

Terror seized his heart. What had happened to her? His first thought when he woke from his nightmare was that she had been raped, what with the smell of her blood, her pain and her calling to him. But now, as he looked around at the scene before him, all he could think was she had ceased to be. There was no path leading to or way from the flowers that would suggest she had gone from there. Her blood and her very essence that he smelled lead him to believe that some violence had taken her, but what was worse were the seemingly endless flowers that spread all around him. Where they all that was left of his love?. Had her mother done something terrible and unspeakable to keep her from him forever? Once he had the terrifying thought he could not unthink it

Tears blurred his vision. Anger, loss, and desperation flooded his soul and all quickly melded into rage. He balled his fists and could feel his blood burning in his veins. He felt out of breath and turned his head towards the sky, screaming her name in agony. The earth began to tremble beneath his feet, harder and harder until great rifts opened in the ground, leaving gaping holes here and there that flowers tumbled into. The earth trembled so violently it was felt for miles and miles away, but Hades did not care.

Demeter had thought to let mankind die in her grief over losing Persephone to a husband. Now, Hades would destroy the entire world if she was in fact lost to it. The columns of great temples would crumble, monuments would tumble to the ground, mortal dwellings would shake from their foundations, and some things the earth would swallow entirely if his love was lost forever.

Damn the mortals and the earth they dwelt on. The whole world would feel his devastation. He would bring it all down if she was gone.

So it looks like the last chapter shocked a few people! I thought it might, but the birth of the girls is an important hinge in the plot. Thank you for all of the feedback and reviews from over the weekend! Again I have a lot of homework this week -which I should be doing this very moment— but will try and have a new chapter up by the weekend. :)

17. Fear, Panic, and Grief

Temples and shrines throughout Greece were overflowing with frightened mortals, offering continuous sacrifices and petitions to the gods that they believed they must have sorely and egregiously offended, though they knew not how. There had been a brief reprieve when they thought that the world would finally be restored to right with the earth ceased to a dead and barren thing, but now it was arguably much worse. Terrible earthquakes tore through the land, great chasms and rifts opened in the earth from which it was said horrifying monsters crawled out, creatures of the pit that roamed the countryside preying on whatever crossed their path. It drove people into the cities which began to overflow, the streets crowded and dirty, filled with panic and fear.

Some priests began to wonder had it not been the lord of the dead that was responsible for all that had transpired. Had he been making the earth wither and die from below? Regardless, it most certainly seemed that he was the cause of the woe and terrors that beset mankind now, and some began to make endless sacrifices to him in an attempt to placate his unknown anger. Hades though had few if any followers, and there were no temples or even real shrines to him. Rather, those who wished to beseech him sacrificed animals that were black in color, and let their blood drip into pits or deep clefts in the earth.

Still, many believed that such would not please Hades. Sacrifices were rarely offered to the distant and unmovable god. Most believed only more and more souls would satisfy him, which was why he had visited such terrors on the earth. So instead, they cried out to Zeus, the ruler of all the gods and the only one who could command his brother to stop.

Zeus, seeing what transpired below him and hearing the endless outcry from the mortals, weighed the options before him on Olympus. Did Hades even know he was a father? He had not been seen since he returned Persephone as he had been commanded. It was likely he was lonely and grew angrier by the day that his prize had been taken from him so abruptly. Why could he not take lovers in Persephone's absence, Zeus wondered. There were enough comely nymphs to provide him with a different lover for every day that she was gone. But, Hades was not him and he was not Hades. No, they were two very different gods. Actually, Hades was unlike any of the gods, but the only one who could rival and threaten his seat of power, which was the only reason that Zeus did not risk making him any angrier at the moment.

Still, this fit he was throwing beneath the earth had to stop. The world had endured enough over Persephone, though the great resurgence in prayers and sacrifices from the mortals was undeniably much appreciated.

But, there had to be some peace and order in the world again. He would have to send Hermes to the Underworld, as much as he knew the god would hate to travel there again and so soon. He would order Hades to stop this madness, but he knew he must also offer him some incentive to do so.

He rose from his throne and walked towards the room where the cause of all this turmoil lay. He quietly stood in the doorway, watching her where she lay. Three days had passed since Apollo had brought her and the babes to Olympus, but she had not awakened yet. Eileithyia

had said that her trauma and pain must have been great indeed, and that it might be a little while before she woke. She seemed to be coming around, though. Even now as he looked upon her, she appeared restless and moved a bit in her sleep. It would not be long now, he thought. He then looked to the ivory crib where the two tiny goddesses lay, still unnamed. When he had sent word to Demeter by Hermes that she was a grandmother, she had wanted to retrieve the children instantly. But not until Persephone woke. Then, when she was well, she could return to her mother with the babes.

If Hades did not know of his fatherhood, he would likely want to see them. And Zeus could not imagine his seeing them without also taking them. He did not see how he could keep his babes from him if he were to lay eyes on them, and all would be better if Hades simply waited his turn to have the three goddesses back. Zeus sighed though. What could he offer Hades in turn for ceasing his havoc on the earth? Persephone was the only thing he desired and the one thing he could not give him.

Perhaps if he made some sort of promise to him. He looked at the crib and pondered this for a moment. He could swear on the Styx that once his children returned to him that they could remain with him forever. He could not separate the newborns from their mother but in a year, when it would be time for Persephone to return from the Underworld for her second sojourn with her mother, the babes would be old enough to do without her. He would never rule in the matter of them or exercise any power over the goddesses, they would belong to Hades alone.

Likely, that would not enough for Hades. He knew that. But he hoped the show of goodwill might set in motion some solution to all this madness. Zeus turned and walked away from the bedchamber. He had to summon Hermes, who was not going to like the task about to be placed before him.

In the mortal world, Demeter was busying herself making her dwelling ready to accommodate two newborn babies. When Hermes had brought her the startling news nearly three days ago, Demeter's first reaction was to be devastated. She wept at the thought that her daughter had born two children, completely alone and helpless under the stars. If they had not argued and she had stayed but a little while longer, she could have helped her daughter deliver the two goddesses.

She remembered her labor with Persephone. She too had been alone, Zeus having turned from her by then and Hera being furious. Demeter had wandered the fields and countryside of Greece for weeks, sad, scared, and alone. When it came time to deliver, Demeter had done so alone. Her labor had lasted for hours, how long exactly she knew not. The pain had been unimaginable, comparing to nothing she had felt before or since in her long life, but when she finally held her baby in her arms she forgot it in an instant. She had decided in that moment that she would never let the little one go, she would devote her life to caring for her daughter, protecting her from all the ills and pain of the world, most especially men.

Demeter's initial devastation had stemmed from the fact that she had not been there for Persephone, and that was her fault for arguing with her, for otherwise Persephone would have been safe at home when her labor came upon her. That she had had children did not upset her now. She was after all a wife and it had been bound to happen eventually, she told herself. At least it had not been while she was down *there*, where Hades would likely never let the children ascend from.

Now, at least, she could help Persephone care for the babes and show her how to be a mother. Persephone with her nurturing spirit would likely pick it up right away though. Demeter could not wait to see the babies, two girls Hermes had said. She wondered what their names would be, and whom they would favor.

Now Demeter had not one but three goddesses to obsess over and to love. While she had not wanted Persephone to have children by Hades, she was overjoyed by the thought that she was a grandmother. It was not the little ones' fault who their father was, as it was no more Persephone's fault who hers was, and it was not something that Demeter even considered now as she had never held it against Persephone that Zeus was her father. No, Demeter would love them madly, just as she loved her daughter. All she wanted now was for Persephone to wake, to be well, and to return to her with her little ones.

Later that day, as the sun was beginning to dip below the horizon, Hermes made his way to the Underworld once more. What dreaded tasks he had been assigned with as of late, he thought to himself. He tired of bringing messages to the dark lord that would only enrage him. While he was just the messenger, he would bear the brunt of all the anger and rage that the message would inspire.

As Hermes crossed the Styx, he noted that somehow the Underworld looked even gloomier than usual. It was all in his head, he told himself. He made his way into the palace and followed the dark halls towards Hades' throne room as he had several days before. Coming to the great bronze doors, Hermes took a deep breath and entered.

The vast and empty room was darker than usual. Few torches lit the walls and those that did cast great shadows all over. A bit of light did reach the dais where the black throne sat, Hades on it. His legs were visible, bronze greaves covering them. The dark lord must be fully armored, Hermes thought grimly. The rest of his body that was leaning against his throne was covered in shadow.

Hermes heard a deep and low growl somewhere from the shadows. Hermes swallowed as he approached slowly and stopped before the lord of the Underworld.

"Lord Hades," Hermes spoke but his voice was not as confident as he had intended it to be.

Silence. Hades did not acknowledge the greeting.

Hermes shifted ever so slightly where he stood and waited for a moment longer. When no reply came, he continued.

"I come with an urgent and most imperative message from Zeus, king of—"

"Do you think I do not know who you come for or what message you bring, Olympian?" a voice so cold and low came that it felt like ice being poured over Hermes.

"My lord—"

"Silence!"

Hermes fell silent as instructed. Slowly, Hades rose from his throne and stepped down from the dais and into the light.

He was indeed wearing his bronze armor, but that was not what made him look so menacing now. His beard was untrimmed and his hair unkempt. He looked wild and feral, a murderous gleam in his cold blue eyes that were wide with rage and madness.

Hermes fought the overpowering urge to shrink away, but willed himself to hold his ground. Hades stopped a foot or so before him and spoke again.

“Let me guess...” he growled at the messenger, “You master is not amused by my recent....*enhancements* to the world above?”

Enhancements was a sarcastic reference to the destruction and panic he was causing the mortals. It was time that someone shared his grief, Hades thought.

Before Hermes could reply Hades began again.

“And you have been sent to tell me that I must stop this madness, *or else*.”

Hermes looked as though he were finally about to speak again but Hades had no desire to hear him speak at all.

“But tell me, messenger, what can your king threaten now? He has taken the only thing of which I care anything for. And unless I am mistaken in believing that she cannot be returned to me, I am afraid you have traveled all this way for nothing.”

Though afraid, Hermes put aside his fear for a moment to consider Hades’ words. He did not seem to know that he was a father, as Zeus had wondered might be the case. Perhaps that knowledge would make him more pliant.

“My lord,” Hermes found his voice, shaky though it was. “You do not know what has happened. Your wife has—”

“I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAS HAPPENED! DO YOU THINK THAT ZEUS OR ANY CREATURE IN THE COSMOS COULD KEEP IT FROM ME?!”

Hermes felt as though the force of the enraged eruption from Hades had shoved him backwards with its might. He did not have time to gather himself and respond though. Hades had come within an inch of his face now, his eyes terrifying and his aura as potent and dreadful as death itself.

“And because she is dead the world will follow after her.” Hades said so lowly and terrifyingly that Hermes believed nothing else to be true if that was not. But he was also alarmed and surprised at the words, so much so that he stared incredulously at the dark lord for a moment before finding his tongue again.

“My lord—”

But that was all Hermes could say before something wet and sharp closed around his left leg and swiftly brought him to cold marble floor.

He cried out and flung out his arms instinctively as he connected with the floor, stopping his face from hitting the marble. He threw his head back to look over his shoulder to see what had laid siege to him and nearly fainted away with fright. Closed around his lower left leg and now dragging him away was the right head of the hound Cerberus, a massive three headed dog with the tail of a dragon Hades’ most favored pet. While its jaws did not crush him, they

firmly gripped him as the creature drug him across the throne room floor and towards the great bronze doors. The other two heads snarled and drooled hungrily and Hermes now knew what the growling noise had been from earlier.

Screaming and calling back towards Hades, Hermes implored him. "Please, my lord! Please hear me!" he called, terrified and not having delivered what he now knew had been the most important part of his message. But it was no use, the hound bit down on his leg and the pain took his voice from him as he cried out in agony, turning the corner and disappearing from sight as the hound drug him to he knew not where.

Hades nonchalantly watched Hermes disappear and turned back towards his throne. Having silently watched the entire scene from a dark corner, Hecate came forth now.

"My dark and terrible lord," she said reverently, "Perhaps you should have let him speak."

Hades did not turn to look at her. "I knew what he had to say, he denied none of it, did you not hear?" he snapped.

"I believe he was too afraid to speak, my king. And he had begun to speak again when your pet took him away."

"It matters not! He came to threaten and command me, as he always does. Except now, he nor any other god has anything to hold over me." Hades spat but his voice threatened to break, but Hecate pretended not to hear.

Hades took his seat on his throne again and rubbed his temples. He had not slept since he woke from that nightmare. That had been days ago, and while exhausted, he could not sleep. He was too devastated to have enough peace to even come close to sleepiness. And even worse, he feared that he would only dream of her.

Hecate came closer to him to kneel by his throne. Gently, she spoke. "My lord. Are you sure that she is lost?"

Hades' entire body clenched. Hecate knew better than to mention her name, to hear it spoken aloud was too much for him. He swallowed hard but kept his hand over his eyes.

"I have told you a thousand times. The dream, the flowers. How I cannot feel her in the Upperworld. How she no longer calls to me....what other answer is there? Hermes himself did not deny it...." he whispered now, his voice being overcome with emotion and new tears threatening. How was it that he could still cry? In the three days after his discovery of the flowers, he felt he had cried enough to fill both the Styx and the Lethe for the next thousand years.

Hecate thought he may very well be right, but she was not convinced. She could not believe it. Something told her it was not true, but also for Hades' sake, she refused to believe that the Fates would take from him the one thing he had ever really loved.

"My lord, let me go to the Upperworld. Let me seek answers for myself." She asked him gently.

Hades did not respond. It would be a pointless endeavor. And he may need her here what with things to come. But, he still had a tiny seed of hope in the bottom of his broken heart.

Perhaps he had been wrong. He knew not how, and felt like a fool for allowing himself any hope at all, but he could not help it.

When he still did not answer, Hecate tried again.

“Hades....” She rarely used his name, but now she felt it was necessary to reach him.

“Fine.” Was all he answered, and so quietly she barely heard it.

Hecate inclined her head and rose to leave him to his thoughts. He only wanted to be alone now anyways. She would wait until it was completely dark in the Upperworld. She needed to go unseen as she sought answers for her lord. She hoped with all her heart and immortal soul that her instincts were right, for the fate of the world and for her lord.

So I am a bit late with posting, but summer semester is a beast! Can't wait to graduate in December! Anyway, please bear with our main characters for a bit longer. They will find their way back into each other's arms eventually.

18. Revelations

Persephone felt as though she had been sleeping for far too long when she began to slowly rouse from her deep slumber. She did not open her eyes, but let her mind gain greater and greater consciousness first. Her body was so sore, it hurt to barely shift under the sheets. It was like a mountain had been resting on top of her and finally removed, she thought. Why should she feel that way? She opened her eyes a tiny bit and tried to sit up, but she was so sore she stopped and sank back into the bed.

This bed. It felt like the one she and her lord shared.....but she was not in the Underworld anymore.....she was at home... she had argued with her mother and stormed out into the night....she had... she had—

Persephone's eyes shot open, her hands flying to her stomach which was as flat as it had ever been. Had she dreamed it? No, it was too painful and too real. She bolted up in bed, her anxiety winning the battle with the pain it took to do so, and looked around her.

She did not recognize the room. The room was white marble with a pristine glow about it. It looked like what little of Olympus she had seen. Taking in the room briefly, she heard a small noise that immediately seized her attention.

Turning towards the sound, Persephone saw an ivory crib not far from the bed. A large crib. From where she sat she could not see into it, but her breath hitched in her throat and she believed she felt her immortal heart stop.

Bringing her legs over the side of the bed as quickly as the pain would allow, she practically ran to the crib.

Peering into it, she gasped and rivers of tears instantly began to roll down her face.

She had not dreamed it. They both lay there, side by side, as perfect as she remembered her first born. She had not seen but only heard her youngest crying before she passed from consciousness, but now saw that she had yet another perfect little girl. The younger was a bit larger than the first, and Persephone remembered the pain being greater. There was no question which was which, Persephone could instantly tell who was who.

Who was who. They didn't even have names. How long had she been asleep that her babes endured so? Persephone was angry at herself, her babies had needed her. And how had she come to be on Olympus? She remembered giving birth alone in the fields not far from her mother's home. Had Demeter found her? Had she been so angry she disavowed her and her father was forced to take her and the little ones in?

And Hades! Her lord and love! Did he know he was a father? Had he come? Could he even come? Persephone had so many questions, but she forgot them all as her firstborn wiggled and opened her eyes to stare directly up at her mother.

Persephone gasped gently and looked back into Hades' beautiful blue eyes. That made her cry even more. She reached down and gathered the little one to bring to her chest. It wiggled

a little but seemed happy to be in her mother's arms finally. It only took a moment for her to start to cry however, and Persephone thought she must be hungry. How had the babes been fed all this time? She fretted and decided that she must feed them immediately.

The cries of the baby in her arms started to wake the other baby still in the crib, and it seemed to be ready to cry as well. Persephone turned as quickly as possible and went to lay the baby gently on the bed. Quickly returning to the crib, she reached in and grabbed her youngest. She realized as she brought that one to her chest that she had not held it before, and the babe calmed considerably the instant it felt its mother's embrace. Persephone saw that her youngest also had her father's blue eyes, and she wondered if the babes would look anything like her at all. She had wanted a little miniature of Hades, but she had envisioned a boy. That mattered nothing now. She could not imagine being disappointed with the two perfect and divinely beautiful creatures she had given birth to.

Persephone came back to the bed and propped against the headboard, one baby in her arms and the other next to her. The crib was too far away, she had to have them both as close to her as possible.

Laying her youngest next to her, she picked up her firstborn again. She deserved to be fed first, as it was her right. Persephone had seen mortal women feed their babies, she assumed it could not be hard, and she hoped the babes would know what to do. Pushing the strap of her dress down over her left breast, which she only now noted was bigger than usual, she brought the baby's mouth gently to her nipple. The baby, feeling her mother's nipple gently pressing against its lips, instinctively opened its mouth and latched on, sucking hungrily.

Persephone was awe struck as she gazed down at her babe. How was it possible that something seemingly as simple as feeding her baby could make her so tremendously happy? More tears came, slowly but steady, as she smiled and laughed softly at the sight and feeling. She had wanted a baby so badly these past months, and now she had two.

Holding the feeding babe securely to her with one arm, Persephone reached out with her other to cup her other baby's head with her hand, to comfort it while she waited her turn. She could not wait to name them, but she would not do so without Hades. With a twinge of sadness Persephone wondered how long that would be, but she would not name them until they were in their father's arms no matter how long it took.

Hecate walked through the vast fields of flowers that Hades had told her about under the light of the moon. Seeing the epicenter that he spoke of, where Persephone must have lain, she saw why Hades had been disconcerted. Yet, she could not believe the worst. Persephone could grow flowers with the mere brush of her fingers, but that her death would yield mere meadows seemed strange to her, expansive though they were.

She gently ran her hands through the flowers, trying to discern if Persephone's very essence was in the flowers, if they were actually all that was left of her. She definitely could not feel her in the Upperworld, but that did not mean she was dead. Hecate looked to the heavens. Perhaps Hades had not looked everywhere as he believed he had. But before she would dare to venture to Olympus, she looked in the direction of Demeter's home. Likely Hades had been in and out in an instant, not wanting to dwell there long for obvious reasons. She would travel there first, in case she could uncover something he had overlooked.

Persephone was feeding her youngest now, as in love with her as she was with her sister. Suddenly, she was roused from the trance her babes had her in by a sound coming from the doorway. Looking up, she saw her father.

She had not seen him since the day she met Hades months ago in the throne room here on Olympus. That had been one of few occasions. She had spent the vast majority of her life solely under her mother's care. And that had been fine with her. She did not know exactly what had happened between he and her mother, only that he supposedly had as many lovers as there were stars in the sky, and that he had broken her mother's heart.

They silently regarded each other for a moment, each nervous about having to speak with the other, especially considering the circumstances.

Zeus was clothed in a simple white tunic, his head bare of its crown and his expression tired. He was a tall god with a broad frame, but he was still shorter and less sculpted than Hades. He slowly moved from the doorway and came to sit gently on the side of bed. Looking down at the sated and dozing baby not at Persephone's breast, his gaze softened. He wondered if that is what Persephone had looked like when she was a newborn. He had not seen her until she was older. He was slightly unnerved however by Hades' eyes staring back at him. He pushed the thought of his brother from his mind and quietly spoke.

"What are their names?"

Persephone had been watching him quietly and more alertly than she had ever regarded anything in her life. Her motherly instincts had taken over without her even realizing. They were a second nature that she felt she'd always had now.

She looked back to her nursing babe as she answered him, trying to contain her tears.

"Their father will name them when they are finally in his arms." She said firmly.

She heard Zeus sigh. "Persephone..." he began.

"I do not care how long it will be, I will not name them without him." Persephone replied and looked up to stare the king of the gods square in his eyes.

Zeus gave her an exasperated but not unkind expression.

"Child, you cannot let them go nameless for six moons."

"Nor should they have to, as they shouldn't have to be parted from their lord father." Persephone was again firm but not openly hostile. She wanted to be hostile to him for so many reasons, but she knew it would not help her situation.

"They cannot be parted from you so soon, not that I believe you would allow them to be, and I cannot part you from your mother when I have made a promise and a ruling in the matter."

"A promise and a ruling that no one ever considered my feelings or desires in, though I am the one who must suffer for it." Persephone said it almost matter of fact, but Zeus saw the emotions burning in her eyes.

Zeus was growing impatient. He shifted on the bed to face her completely.

“Am I so unjust? Your mother has you for half the year, and your husband for the rest. You have the best of both worlds.” Zeus spoke firmly with her now as well.

“And what other choice did I have, when your mother’s grief was so great that she forsook all her duties to let the earth and mortals perish in your absence? I cannot sacrifice the whole world to satisfy the whims of your husband.” Zeus continued.

“His love for me is not a whim! No two gods... no two creatures have ever loved as we do! You could not even fathom it.”

Persephone had been overcome. She had spoken before she even realized it, much less realized the words. While she had meant it, she was afraid now as she saw her father’s eyes go wide at having been spoken to in such a manner. She calmed herself and looked back to her baby, it being nearly satisfied.

Zeus looked away before he responded. So, it was true. She loved him, and may even have been a willing captive for all anyone knew. He wondered if Demeter knew how Persephone felt about her husband.

He looked back to her as she laid the baby down next to her sister and adjusted her gown to cover herself. Sighing heavily, he continued.

“You will return to him in six moons time, as was originally commanded. He will wait his turn, as he was instructed, though I see he has already defied that order.”

Persephone met his gaze again, instantly grasping his meaning. She blushed and looked away.

“He is not to do so again. He will desire to take the children, and if he does, you cannot go with them. Think then how unhappy you will be.” Zeus said and saw Persephone squeeze her eyes shut.

“Does he even know?” she asked with her eyes still closed.

“Hermes has been sent this very night to tell him. And to....attempt to placate him.”

Persephone looked at her father again. “Placate him?”

“He has grown....upset in your absence. And the mortals have suffered enough in this matter.” Zeus answered cryptically and Persephone did not press him, only wondering what her love had done in his anger. She hoped it was nothing too terrible, she hated the idea that anyone or anything should have to suffer over her. She would ask her mother what had happened.....that was, if her mother would even want her back.

“Does....does mother know?” Persephone asked timidly.

“She does.” Zeus answered simply.

He saw her brow furrow, thinking the worst.

“She is eager to have you back, along with the babes. When you feel able, you may return to her as soon as you like.”

Persephone sighed a deep breath of relief and bowed her head to her father.

With that, Zeus rose from the bed and walked from the room. Persephone was glad he was gone, his presence was always off-putting to her. Leaning back against the headboard, she studied her perfect and now sleeping again babes.

She was so relieved that her mother was not angry. And knowing that, she could not wait to show her the babies. She hoped that she would not mind that they had Hades' eyes. Surely she wouldn't, surely she would love them because they were hers. She smiled at the thought of presenting them proudly to her mother, but then her smile faded when she thought of who she wanted most to show them to but knew she could not.

He should have been there. He should have been the first one to hold them when they came into the world, the one that placed them safely in her arms. He should be here now at her bedside, holding and cuddling their babies as they fell asleep.

Hot tears stung Persephone's eyes as she thought of her love. They were a family now, but they could not be together. She knew her father was right about calling to Hades, he would want to instantly take them home. But she could not wait to see him for six moons, nor would she name the babies without him. She didn't know what to do, all she knew was she wanted to leave Olympus and go back to her mother as soon as possible.

Tears still streaming, Persephone carefully lay back down and positioned herself on her side so that she could face her two sleeping goddesses. She would rest and recover for the night and then return to her mother in the morning.

As she lay regarding her little ones, she understood her mother much better now. For by the Fates, she would never let anyone harm them or take them from her.

Zeus was walking towards his own chambers as it was becoming late indeed, when he passed a balcony where Apollo stood looking out into the night sky. Rumbling could be heard in the distance as more earthquakes terrorized the mortal world. Zeus walked out onto the balcony and Apollo spoke without turning.

"Hermes should have returned hours ago." He said gravely.

"Yes, I know." Zeus answered simply.

"And the earth is no quieter or at any greater peace than before he descended there." Apollo observed out loud as he still gazed out from Olympus.

"Hades wouldn't dare harm the messenger. He is angry but he is not irrational." Zeus said but not being entirely convinced himself.

Apollo turned to face his father now. "No one would ever have imagined that he would steal Persephone for his bride or sire children by her, yet..."

"For the sake of peace in the world I will believe that Hermes is only delayed, not a captive or worse as you suggest." Zeus cut him off.

"So you mean to say that you think Hades will wage full on war if you do not give him his offspring?" Apollo questioned, already fearing the answer was yes.

"War? No. But it is hard to say, in truth. He was a fierce and terrible warrior once, you would have to have seen him yourself to appreciate it. That part of him is buried deep, but not forgotten."

“Why can we not give her and the babes back to him, father?” Apollo began to make the case he had wanted to for some time. He had thought Demeter was the one that should have been punished and forced to attend to her duties. Hades had demanded very little of Olympus and his father, and if what he did want was a minor flower goddess then for the sake of the peace let him have her.

Zeus looked at his son sternly, not liking to be questioned at all. Apollo continued despite that.

“It is such a small thing to let him have her, and the children which are his own, and if it would prevent this madness on the earth? How can we try to bargain with him when he only wants one thing and has such terrible forces at his command? What if he were to release *them*?”

“He is heartbroken, not insane.”

“Love makes gods and mortals alike madmen.” Apollo countered.

Inside, from just around the corner and hidden from sight, Hera stood having heard everything that passed between father and son. She bristled at the idea that the world was being destroyed over one of her husband’s beautiful little bastards. The girl was luckier than she could know, such a minor and insignificant goddess being made Queen of the Underworld and consort of the eldest of the three. Her mother should have seen that too, but she could only see her selfishness. Truly, Hera had thought it a brilliant thing that Persephone had disappeared to the Underworld where she would never have to see her again.

And now, that the world and mankind were being jeopardized over her was too much. While Zeus may have already ruled in the matter, if Hades and Demeter could come to a truce all of this could end. A truce would of course mean nothing less than Demeter giving Persephone back to Hades. She knew Demeter wouldn’t do this willingly. But, Hera thought to herself, she could be very persuasive. Perhaps it was time she paid Demeter a visit.

It was the middle of the night and Demeter should have been asleep, but she was so anxious and edgy after learning that she was a grandmother that her mind couldn’t stop racing. She was still fussing around the dwelling, making sure it would be as comfortable as possible for the newborns, modest though her home was. She was preparing a makeshift crib next to Persephone’s own bed when she heard something outside. She became still, listening silently for what it might be. Persephone wouldn’t be arriving this soon, and who would come in the middle of the night? A moment of fear seized her as she wondered if it were not Hades himself.

She moved stealthily and quickly to the threshold of her dwelling. There, standing before her, was someone she would never have expected. Hera, the beautiful and graceful wife of her former lover, stared back at her. She was clothed elegantly in a magnificent white gown trimmed in gold and matching gold cuffs on her wrists. Golden coils were wrapped around her long blonde locks. Even now, in the middle of the night with only Demeter to see, Hera demanded on appearing every bit a queen.

Demeter felt a bit of her fear still about her but she was largely consumed by suspicion and thinly veiled hostility. She and Hera naturally did not have a friendly relationship, if any at all. Hera had been furious when Persephone was born and even more so as she grew, being a

beautiful and much admired representation of Zeus' infidelity. It was one of many reasons that Demeter had kept Persephone so far from Olympus. Now, as they stood face to face, Demeter could only imagine why Hera had come, but knew it could not be good.

"You are up rather late, are you not? Has something.....stirred you this day?" Hera asked condescendingly.

Demeter's mouth was set in a thin line as she stared back at the vengeful goddess.

"I am sure you have heard," Demeter replied curtly.

"Yes, yes indeed I have." Hera replied slowly. "And seen them even. Their room is not so far from mine...." Hera said and Demeter burned hot. She did not like Hera's tone at all, or that she had been so close to her daughter and grandchildren. She also didn't like that Hera appeared to be threatening, though she was unsure how just yet.

"It would be so terrible and unfortunate, if something were to happen to the babes before they returned to the Underworld..... their father would likely rend the heavens and the earth entirely... if he does not anyway, which seems likely."

Demeter felt like the Phlegethon was flowing through her veins. She was so furious, so affronted and manic at the threat to her grandchildren that she wanted to fling herself at the goddess and tear her offending throat out with her bare hands. She seethed, chest heaving as she regarded Hera with eyes widened with rage.

"And what exactly would befall them?" Demeter forced out.

Hera let her lips slowly curl in a malevolent smile. It was out of place on her beautiful face but also terrifying and insane. She knew Hera hated Persephone and herself. Of course she would hate the babes as well, but that she would harm defenseless infants seemed even too low for her. But the look in Hera's eyes told Demeter that she was as serious as Tartarus.

"Something will befall them, unless... you give them and their mother back to their lord." Hera said simply.

"You have no right to demand that of me! Zeus has ruled—"

"And he cannot control Hades or bend him to his will in this a matter! Do you not see the earth imploding around you? Not that you likely care, as you tried to destroy it yourself in your selfishness! Your daughter was made a queen, with a far greater husband than she could have ever dreamed of. You should have been proud and left her where she was." Hera spat as she launched into an attack on Demeter.

Demeter bristled at those accusations, though she knew in her heart that they were true. Still, Hera had no right to stand before her at her home and level these things against her. The only thing that protected her this moment from a violent and unrelenting assault was that she was Zeus' wife.

"I fail to see how harming Hades' infant daughters will bring peace to the world, Hera. In fact, I would think that you wanted to destroy it completely." Demeter said through gritted teeth.

"Oh, but whom would he believe had harmed his young? Certainly not I. No. Who, of all in creation, would he believe that would find his offspring disdainful as to do them harm?"

Hera asked with mocking innocence.

Demeter understood her meaning. And she was right. Hades would believe that she had been devastated by Persephone having his children; the living, breathing signs of his ruination of her. That is not how Demeter saw it, but he did not know that.

“Why?” Demeter demanded.

Hera came a little closer. “Because this isn’t going to end until Hades has what is his returned to him. Hermes went down there to deliver the news of his fatherhood and has not returned. I will not sit back and watch the world crumble into ruin over an insignificant goddess whose only power is to grow lilies on a whim.”

The two goddesses stared at each other in potent and dangerous silence. The ultimatum had been laid out, now Demeter only had to decide how she would respond. Though furious and feeling on the brink of insanity, Demeter knew she would not win this. No one would believe her if she told them of Hera’s threat, and she knew Hera had meant what she said. She quietly made her decision and stood there considering the many ways she wished to attempt to kill the immortal goddess before her.

Hera took Demeter’s silence for acquiescence, but just to be sure, she added, “You have one day.”

And with that, Hera was gone as suddenly as she had came.

Now that she was gone, Demeter allowed herself to fully respond to what had just happened. Breaking into hard sobs, she sank to her feet there in the threshold of her dwelling, her hands covering her face, and wept loudly.

Not far, clothed by the darkness, Hecate listened silently. Persephone was not only alive, but had born two babies by her lord. Hades would be beside himself with joy, if he could even believe it. But then he was likely to be upset as well. He would want more than anything to bring his little ones back to the Underworld immediately.

Perhaps they would very soon be with him anyway, and permanently. Hecate would immediately go to tell her lord of what she had heard, but she would leave out the threats from Hera. She knew Hades well enough to know that the knowledge of such a threat would cause him to appear on Olympus immediately, ready to exact terrible vengeance.

If Demeter complied with Hera as she believed she would, then in another day everything would be well. She could only hope for such an outcome. With that thought Hecate made haste for the Underworld, lest Hades or the earth itself suffer a moment longer.

As Hecate arrived in the Underworld she made her way towards the palace, but something caught the corner of her eye in the darkness. Her king was out of doors, wandering the fields of asphodel in the moonlight. He still could not sleep, and Persephone had often walked those fields, having been so used to being out of doors and trying to love the asphodel as much as all the flowers she had left behind.

Hecate walked hastily towards him. Hades did not hear her, he was too lost in his thoughts. He was imagining the way Persephone used to move so gracefully through these fields, looking almost like a shade herself as her feet barely touched the ground. He had not known what to do with himself while he waited for Hecate to return. Undoubtedly, she would come

back with the same sad news that he already knew to be true. But the tiniest part of him hoped against hope. It had been enough hope to make him so restless that he could not be confined by the walls of his palace anymore and had gone out to walk the grey wastes.

As Hecate drew close, Hades finally heard her soft footfalls in the grass. He did not want to turn and look at her, to watch her lips deliver the terrible and hateful truth that would haunt the rest of his immortal life.

He turned slowly, his chest constricting from anxiety and heightened grief, to look at Hecate.

She was nearly to him, and stopped a few feet before him, a wide smile on her face. Hecate watched the emotions shift on his face, his eyes narrowing and his breaths shallow.

“She lives.” Hecate practically whispered.

Hades blinked, looking as though she spoke some language that he had never heard and seeming to have stopped breathing.

“And....”

He tried to hold her gaze as he was being blinded by tears.

“You are a father.” She finished with a wide smile.

19. What Must Be Done

Though Hecate had spoken softly, the words rang in Hades' ears like thunder. He stared back at her in dumbfounded silence, not sure if he had imagined what she had told him.

Persephone was alive. He had heard that and was almost scared to believe it. He was afraid he had finally fallen asleep and merely dreamed these moments, only to wake any second now to a crushing and unbearable reality.

He shook his head and blinked his eyes several times. He was not asleep.

"Hades...? Did you hear me?" Hecate called to him, still a little ways in front of him.

Hades met her eyes again and stared at her for a moment. "A....a father?" he stuttered as though father was a new word that he had never heard and was clueless as to its meaning. "But....that is impossible. It was only days ago that we lay together..." he was out of breath and confused.

Hecate smiled, "But you did so in the Upperworld did you not? Persephone was more fertile than any of us realized it seems."

Hades had managed to give his love a child. She had wanted one so badly. The happiness that filled him with was short lived as he thought of how frightened she must have been. Had she even made it home? Had she given birth alone? If he had only stayed a little longer.....if he had but held her there, under the stars and wrapped in his cloak but a little longer he could have been by her side as he should have been. He felt guilty; it was his fault technically, he did impregnate her. He hoped she had not been in too much pain, but he knew that childbirth was terrible even for immortals.

He had so many questions. He was overjoyed, overcome that his love was alive, but where was she? Were she and the babe alright? Did he have a son or daughter?

He ran his hand over his wild hair, smoothing it back over his head, shaking it gently. "Where—where has she been? Is she alright? Is the babe a boy or girl? How did you come to know these things?" Hades began to assault Hecate with questions as they came to him. Hecate was happy to answer, for the most part. She would be omitting the threats from Hera, knowing better than to start a war.

"I overheard Demeter and Hera speaking at Demeter's home. Persephone is on Olympus being cared for there. The birth was very....strenuous....considering that she gave birth to not one but two goddesses....." Hecate almost giggled at the look that came over Hades face as he registered the words.

Two goddesses. Not one, but two. Two infants. Two daughters. Hades' mind raced faster than he could keep up with. He gasped, and turned away from Hecate to practically stumble in the opposite direction. He covered his mouth with one of his hands, closing his eyes and tilting his head towards the heavens.

Hecate could not tell if he was happy, upset, or in disbelief. She thought to let him have some silence as he took it all in. She also hesitated to tell him that the babies were not to come to the Underworld until Persephone returned herself, which would either be very soon and for good, or in six moons time but at the risk to her newborns. Would Demeter finally give in at Hera's threats? She was almost sure that she would, her reaction after Hera's departure was one of devastation and defeat. And they both knew that Hera meant what she said. But what to tell Hades' in the meantime? More importantly, how was he actually taking it?

"My lord?" Hecate called to him, he still turned from her.

He began to laugh. She had feared she would never hear him laugh again these past few days. He turned to look at her, tears glistening on his face in the moonlight.

"I am a father," he said as if she had not been the one to tell him.

He then turned from her to throw out his arms, his head tilted back and screaming the words again as loud as he could. He was laughing almost hysterically now, running both hands over his hair to smooth it down. Hecate smiled happily back at him, relieved to see him restored.

Or so she thought. His laughs died quickly and his face slowly turned from a happy smile to one that was more... demented.

"I am tired of all this. I am going to bring her back. I am going up there and I am bringing all of them back. Damn Zeus and his laws. My wife and my daughters belong here, in the Underworld, with me."

Hades looked practically unhinged. Hecate's smile faded and was replaced by what she imagined was a look of terror. If only she could tell him that that was likely unnecessary, but she would have to tell too much to tell that.

"Hades, you cannot. Zeus has ruled in the matter—"

"I don't give a damn what he has ruled! They are MINE!" Hades roared like one of the monsters he had lately unleashed on the world above.

"If he deems to stop me, I will give him a war of which the likes he has not seen in centuries." Hades continued, and she knew he meant it.

In the Upperworld, Demeter was trying to compose herself after having a sleepless night thanks to her most unwelcome visitor. She did not want Persephone to have the slightest idea that anything was wrong. She could not know her babes were potentially in danger.

Potentially, Demeter thought. There was no doubt that Hera meant what she said. The infant goddesses were most definitely in danger. Demeter's insides still burned at Hera. She had wanted to kill her a thousand times over and that still wouldn't have been enough. To threaten her was one thing, to threaten defenseless infants was another entirely. Time and Zeus's infidelities had made the goddess cruel and hardened her heart it seemed. Still, it was no excuse.

Demeter had made her choice. Truly, she had no choice. She could not risk the safety of the babies, nor an all-out war as Hades would surely believe it was she that had injured his offspring. She would have to come to a truce with him. She would go to him the first chance she got and attempt to bargain with him. If she gave Persephone and the babes back, perhaps he would let her see them sometimes. Just every now and then, with Persephone having the ability to come and go as she pleased. She didn't want to beg, but she had been driven to that point she was afraid. Hopefully, through his anger which she knew was great and terrible from what he was exacting on the mortal world, he could see some reason.

Besides the babes, Demeter knew this is what Persephone wanted. Even before the babes Persephone wanted nothing but to return to her lord. She was like a shade trapped on earth without him, wandering the fields in despair and desolation. She was not as Demeter remembered her. Hades had made her a woman, a queen, *his* queen, and she would never be the same. Demeter knew now she had been a fool to believe that if she could get Persephone back everything would go back to normal, to the way it had been. But Persephone was his now, and she wanted to be, she loved to be, *his*.

It was early in the morning and Demeter wondered when Persephone would come with the babes. She felt she would go mad waiting all day. She prayed it would be soon, the sooner she could venture down to see Hades the better. She would make up some excuse to disappear for a while. She was afraid to go before Persephone arrived for fear she would still be gone when she came. So she waited. She hoped earnestly that it would be Hermes escorting her home, which would mean that he had only been delayed and not imprisoned in the Underworld as Hera believed. She didn't hope too much though.

Looking about the dwelling one more time, Demeter made sure that she had forgotten nothing in her preparations for the newborns. Suddenly, she heard something and went to the door. She saw Apollo first, which her heart sank at a bit because it meant that Hermes was still missing. Her eyes and thoughts lit on him for only a second however, as she saw Persephone walking slowly behind him. She was carrying a large basket, in which she knew well what the contents must be.

Demeter inclined her head briefly to Apollo who returned the gesture and then rushed past him to her daughter. Much to Demeter's relief, Persephone broke into the biggest smile she had ever seen on her daughter's face.

"Mother!" she exclaimed happily. "Look!"

Demeter reached her and mother and daughter looked down into the basket that was now between them. Persephone was beaming down at her newborns who were awake but quiet at the moment. She had fed them right before taking leave of Olympus, hoping it would calm them for their journey.

Demeter looked down into the basket and was immediately taken aback by the two sets of Hades' blue eyes staring back up at her. Other than that though, they looked just as Persephone had when she was a newborn. Had their eyes been closed, Demeter would have thought she had stepped back in time. She felt fresh tears rushing to her tired eyes as she looked on her beautiful little granddaughters.

"Are they not perfect, mother?" Persephone asked. "I already love them madly." She continued to beam.

“There were never more perfect infants, save for you of course.” Demeter beamed back at her daughter.

Persephone smiled warmly and Demeter thought she was the happiest she had seen her since before Hades took her. No, she was even happier. Happier than she had ever seen her. She was saddened for a split second by the realization that she never could have made her as happy as she was now. But she pushed that thought away and was back to Persephone and the babies.

“Come inside, I have prepared the house as well as I could on such short notice.” Demeter said.

“I’m sure it is fine mother.” Persephone said, eyes still on her babies as she followed her mother into the dwelling.

Apollo dismissed himself, turning to go as he had come. As he went, he wondered how long it would be before Hades came for them, and if a war would follow in his wake.

Persephone entered her room and sat the basket with her babes down next to her bed. She saw the crib her mother had made and wondered if she had been kept in a similar one. She sat quietly while her mother fussed around elsewhere, looking at her daughters. She couldn’t wait for their personalities to begin to shine through. She wondered if they would be more like her or Hades. Hopefully, they would be the perfect combination of both. With her happy heart and his intelligence. Her ability to find beauty in everything and his calm and composed nature. Her gracefulness and his regal airs. Hopefully they would not have her nativity and his occasional lack of rational thought. She smiled as she remembered how he had made so many stupid decisions in this whole debacle. Keeping the truth from her. But she was the one who had ran out into the night and begged him to take her, not even telling her mother goodbye. She hadn’t forgotten her own sins. But they had both committed their offenses out of passion and love. The Fates had made them for one another. She had no doubt of that, not as she looked down at her little ones.

Demeter appeared in the doorway, staring silently at the babies as well. Persephone looked to her. “Can I help with anything? It appears you’ve been very busy.” She asked.

Demeter shook her head. “No, no dear. I was just coming to tell you that I have to go out for a while. I have to tend to one of my shrines. I neglected them to prepare for the babies—”

“Can I help? I will bring the babies, they should fall asleep soon—”

“No, my love. They have traveled far enough for one day. I will not be gone long.” Demeter insisted and hoped she had not overdone it.

Persephone thought maybe the babies were too much for her just yet, and that she needed to be alone with her thoughts for a bit. She had in truth taken it much better than she had expected. Persephone hoped her mother would be able to fully embrace the babies in time, and felt sure she would.

Persephone nodded and smiled. “Alright mother.”

With that, Demeter smiled and turned to go. She drew a cloak over her shoulders and covered her head. She was about to make a journey she had never made before and had never

expected to. She had no other choice. This was the only answer, and what would make her daughter truly happy. Happier than she could ever hope to make her.

Walking towards the Styx, she hoped she would not be gone too long. She didn't want Persephone to be alarmed. But even if she was, she would bring her joyous news upon her return.

In the Underworld, Hades was preparing for full out war. He knew the laws of magic and nature were not to be toyed with or violated lightly. If it were not possible to bring Persephone to the Underworld with the ruling of Zeus, he would have to overthrow the king of the gods. If he could bring Persephone back and did so, Zeus would likely declare war on him as punishment for disobeying him.

The matter of the children did not disturb him. They were his and could be brought to his realm easily. But they could not endure without their mother, and he would not dare separate them.

He wanted so badly see his babes, his infant daughters. To hold them in his arms and watch them fall asleep against his chest. To lay in bed with his darling love while they cuddled their little ones. He wanted so much to see them... did they look like him? Hopefully they looked like their beautiful mother.

He would see them soon, he vowed it.

He was standing in his armory, carefully lifting his helmet from its stand. He had been wearing the rest of his bronze armor since he thought Persephone had been irrevocably taken from him. He had been anticipating something like this as he tore the world apart from below. He had expected that his brother would threaten war with him if he did not cease his attack on the mortal world. But that was before he realized his love was still alive and she had borne him two perfect children.

He would have them back. No matter what the cost. He was mad with love and longing. He had often marveled at the mortals through the years who had died of grief or took their own lives in order to follow their lover down to the Underworld. But now he understood perfectly.

Hades affixed his bronze helmet that covered everything but his mouth. His long and wild black hair spilled from underneath it. He looked like a mighty and fearsome warrior, looking much less like a madman now that his face was covered.

He walked from the armory and towards his throne room, looking for Hecate. As he rounded the corner very near there he saw her coming towards him, looking alarmed. Alarm was not an expression he ever saw on her calm and controlled face.

"Speak." He commanded as she attempted to close the distance between them.

"You have a visitor my king." She said, and he could not read her expression well enough to tell how he should feel about that.

A visitor. Certainly not his brother. He would not dare.

“Oh?” his deep voice accompanied his blue eyes darkening in a manner that anyone else would have found terrifying.

“And who so dares?” he growled.

Hecate hesitated for a split second, then almost whispered lest the goddess around the corner hear her.

“Demeter.”

Only three more chapters! Well, two chapters and an epilogue, which makes this story actually much longer than I originally intended. I have finals this week so will probably post again around the weekend.

On an unrelated note is anyone going to Dragon*Con this year? I pre-ordered my badge and am beyond excited! Anyway, have a great week everyone!

20. Truce

Hades narrowed his eyes, not at Hecate but at her words, and at first thought to tell her she must be mistaken. Demeter, like most gods of the world above, had never dared venture to the Underworld. However, she of all gods was the last Hades ever thought would darken the threshold of this palace.

What possible reason could she have for coming? Unless.....Zeus had sent her to reason with him. Why he thought she would be a good choice Hades could not understand. Unless it was because she was the mother of his bride and she should thus have some way of appealing to him that others did not. Zeus would know better, considering he had witnessed their last meeting on Olympus. Their exchange had been less than cordial, to say the least. If Demeter thought she would make him see reason, she who took his love from him in the first place, she was in for quite a rude awakening.

Not speaking, Hades moved past Hecate towards his throne room where Demeter was apparently waiting for him. Hecate called to him and stopped him in his tracks.

“Hades, please....please hear what she has come to say before you—” she began but the look in Hades’ eyes told her to silence herself. His blue eyes were like ice that she could practically feel cutting her.

Hades turned back towards his destination. Taking a deep breath, he slowly turned the corner to calmly walk into throne room.

There, standing towards the center of the room and looking as though she had rather be anywhere else in the cosmos, was indeed Demeter.

She is certainly here against her will, Hades thought. *Zeus must think I am a great fool if I will be persuaded by her.*

Demeter sensed him walk into the room and turned to immediately lock eyes with him. Their last meeting had been hostile and emotional. Both ancient gods had had nearly all they could take in the matter of the goddess they loved, and regarded each other like two wild animals, one waiting for the other to make a move so the battle could begin. Hades particularly looked ready for a fight as he was still wearing his helmet and all his armor. Demeter thought to herself how little he had changed through the years. He could have been that young and fearless warrior she had known during the Titanomachy. The energy that was rolling off of him was primal and terrifying. She hoped he would give her time to deliver her message, and maybe even to see a little reason.

Hades finally broke the suffocating silence.

“Zeus is an even greater fool than I thought if he believed sending you here could placate me. You should have been his last choice.” Hades all but growled.

Demeter reminded herself that she had vowed not to lose her temper with him. Forcing herself to remain calm, She answered him.

“Zeus did not send me. He has no idea I’m here. No one does.” She answered quietly.

Hades wasn’t sure if he believed her or not. This made no sense to him yet.

Walking in a slow, wide circle around her, he lifted his helmet over his head and tucked it under his arm.

Demeter was instantly struck by how different he looked. His beard was not short and trim but overgrown and his hair was wild and unkempt. His eyes looked mad, and somehow even bluer than usual. His anger at Persephone’s loss had been greater than she realized. Perhaps, perhaps he did care for her as passionately as Persephone believed he did. She certainly saw more than anger in his eyes; there was also grief and sadness, which were two emotions she had come to know well recently.

“And tell me, what possible reason could you have for visiting me *sister*?” he snarled at her. “Am I wreaking too much havoc on your pretty little Upperworld that you yourself tried to destroy mere weeks ago?”

Hades’ voice was dripping with venom. He was indeed mad it seemed; unhinged practically. Demeter swallowed and looked him squarely in the eyes.

“I have come to make a truce with you,” she said firmly.

This produced a cackle from Hades, which did not amuse Demeter at all.

He continued to circle her. “A truce? When this all started because you had to have Persephone all to yourself? Because you could not let her grow up or share her with any other living creature? Your selfishness that threatened the whole of humanity and the earth?! Come to a truce?!” Hades yelled the last two sentences.

Demeter shut her eyes at his assault. What he said was true, and that is why it was so hard to hear. Again she forced herself to remain calm. Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes again.

“I know how it must seem to you, Hades. But I—I—did not know the truth. I thought her lost forever for weeks, then when I knew the truth I thought you had stolen her from me, as you lead both Zeus and I to believe. You cannot know how terrible it was—”

“Oh! Don’t I?” Hades shot back, taking Demeter by surprise.

Hades did know. He knew what it was like to think his love taken against her will, only then to think her lost to him forever. His grief had been unbearable. Like a terrible, crushing weight always on top of his chest, with no hope of relief from it, with a heart and soul both cleaved in half and aching until it drove him crazy. He may not be a mother, but he was a soul mate, and that pain was just as great he believed.

“I saw her in my dreams, in pain and calling to me. When I came to look for her, searching high and low, only to find fields of flowers.....so many flowers covered in her blood and essence. And who thought to tell me—a king and husband that he was also a FATHER?!”

Hades roared like a monster at Demeter, who was too busy putting together all the pieces to the puzzle in her mind to be alarmed by his volume and rage at the moment. It all made sense, his tearing the world apart from below. He had thought her dead, and was exacting

terrible revenge on the world for it. But Hermes....he had been sent to tell Hades of his fatherhood.

“Hermes was sent to tell you; did you not receive him?” Demeter asked.

Hades stared back at her, a little flustered at the realization but he kept it hidden. The messenger god should have spoken up instead of cowering and whimpering, Hades thought as he dismissed his oversight.

“I received him....but he did not have time to deliver his message.” Hades answered cryptically.

Demeter’s eyes widened in horror. What had he done to him? Would he even hear her out? For the first time in their long lives, Demeter felt a chill run down her spine as she regarded her older brother.

Demeter gently shook her head from side to side. “What has happened to you?” she almost whispered.

“You have always been brooding and sulky.....but you have also been rational and steadfast. But this... this madness? You cannot carry on this way.” Demeter said.

“How dare you presume to tell me what I must do. You, who after years of enjoying your daughter’s company and love, refused to let her become a woman and neglected your sacred duties.”

Demeter felt her face flush in shame. She was determined not to rise to his anger as he continued.

“While I have spent centuries, eons practically alone and unloved by anyone! And when the Fates finally saw fit to give me someone to love, that loves me, actually loves *me*, I have her snatched away for six moons at a time as punishment?!”

“Hades—”

“Can you imagine what would happen if I neglected my duties as you did? What chaos the entire universe would fall into? If you think what I have allowed to happen in the last three days is terrible you have seen nothing yet—”

“Brother! Please hear me.” Demeter begged.

“Why should I? You want me to stop and I will not. Not until I have what is rightfully mine returned to me—”

“Which is why I have come! If you would but let me speak!” she barked at him finally, unable to restrain herself any longer.

Hades narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “I find that difficult to believe.” He countered, but feeling a bit uneasy at hearing her call him brother. He could not remember the last time she had done so.

“Fine.” He murmured. “Pray tell, what is your ‘offer?’”

Demeter took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “You....you can have her back. And the babes, as they are yours.”

Hades' eyes widened a bit and but he said nothing. That sounded far too good to be true. He was not convinced.

"And how is that? Her father has ruled that we must share her, and you just give her up? You must think I am as a great a fool as your former lover does." He snarled at her.

"I do not, and Zeus only ruled in the matter because we could not come to an agreement between ourselves. If we do so now—"

"Come to an agreement?! When have you ever tried to be agreeable?" Hades interrupted her. He could not help himself. Hecate was listening from just around the corner, rolling her eyes every time he spoke as he could not simply listen. She silently prayed that he would not unleash Cerberus on her before this was over.

Demeter shut her eyes and again calmed her temper. "This isn't about me or you Hades, it is about the one we love. I cannot change what has passed, but you and I can change the now and future. Please, *please* stop this terrible assault on the earth."

"So, I am to be a good boy, and then my wife and children will be returned to me, forever?" Hades asked.

"So long as I can, just sometimes, see them? You could allow her to come and go to the Upperworld as she pleases—"

Hades turned around, shaking his head violently. "Conditions, of course. And what else am I to allow? Do you want to come live with her here too?! Shall I have your own quarters furnished next to ours, *mother-in-law*?"

"Hades Aidoneus! Enough!" she finally screamed at him, unable to cool herself any longer. "Why must you have her for every second of the rest of eternity? Why must I say goodbye to her forever when you will not?! I know that I have acted inexcusably, I not only know it but seek to amend it. I thought that when I got her back that everything would be as it had been before, but Persephone is so changed now, she could never be happy without you. I love her enough to give her back to you, but why must it be forever? Can she not visit me sometimes? Help me herald the spring? And the babes! They will have some of her powers, they will need to grow and nurture those in the fields where they were born and that brought up their mother—"

"My children shall reside in this realm, under my protection and rule, forever if I so decide," Hades cut her off vehemently.

"Yet you fault me for doing the same with my child? Or now that you are a father do you understand me better?"

Hades bristled at her words. He did not like having his actions compared to hers at all. He mulled them over for a moment, tasting their truth despite his anger at them. He did not respond to her, but she could tell by the look in his eyes that she had made her point.

"Why can they not be children of both realms, as they truly are? Half yours and half hers, half life and half death, there has never been a god like them and there will likely never be again. Please..." Demeter continued since he remained silent.

Hades' chest heaved, furious by her deeming to tell him what he should do with his offspring. His offspring.....he had not even laid eyes on them. He could not imagine ever

letting them leave his realm after he had.

“Hades, please, do not keep the children from me forever...” Demeter’s voice was starting to break and she felt on the verge of begging. Hades sensed that and turned his back to her. *Keep his children from her*, his children were being kept from him. He felt tears threatening but he would not let her see. He could not. Perhaps the deal was not so bad.....he could agree to let Persephone venture to her mother’s dwelling for a few hours once every year.....and perhaps even follow her with the aid of his helm to watch over her in secret. He did not feel he could take any chances anymore after what had happened.

He turned back to her, only after he was sure that tears would not escape his eyes. Demeter could not tell if she had worn away at him, his icy eyes betrayed nothing but anger.

Suddenly, she saw his face soften so slightly that it was almost imperceptible.

“Do you swear, on the Styx, to return her and the babes to me, permanently, if I allow her to....visit you... briefly... sometimes?”

Demeter had tears glistening in her eyes. “Yes,” she whispered.

“And you swear on the Styx, that you will never threaten the world or forget your duties to it again?” Hades asked.

“I swear it on the Styx,” she said just above a whisper. “So long as you swear to stop this madness.”

Hades stared at her and just as he began to part his lips to agree, she continued.

“And to never, ever, as long as your immortal heart shall beat, harm or stray from Persephone.” It was Demeter’s turn to sound threatening and her golden eyes showed bright with their own anger.

Hades scoffed at her. “That you would demand I swear such a thing shows just how little you know about me, sister. I would cast myself into the deepest, darkest pit in Tartarus before I would hurt her. And it is not possible that I could stray from my own heart, which she took from me that day on Olympus when I first laid eyes on her.”

Demeter had held her breath as he professed his love to her daughter. The pain and the raw emotion in his voice assured her of his love. Despite how angry she had been at him, she could not help but be moved by his devotion. Still, she needed to hear him swear it.

“Hades—”

“I swear it. It is nothing for me to swear something that is already so.” He said very matter of fact.

With that, Demeter knew she had made the right decision, as much as it tore her heart from her chest. She looked down, around, anywhere but his face.

“I expect the three of them returned to me by nightfall.” He said quietly but firmly.

She did not look at him, but nodded in affirmation, still staring at the black marble floor. She was about to dismiss herself when she remembered Hermes. Looking back to him, she

inquired, "Where is Hermes? Someone will need to tell Zeus of our agreement... surely he is not badly abused?" Demeter asked, fearing for the messenger.

Hades rolled his eyes. "He is fine. Cerberus barely touched him..." he trailed off unconvincingly.

Demeter forced herself not to comment. "He will need to bring the news to Zeus before Persephone can return. After he has done so, I will bring them by Charon before the sun sets." Demeter spoke quietly and sadly.

Hades nodded to her and she turned to dismiss herself, there being nothing more to say. As she walked from the room, silent tears ran down her cheeks. Hades felt her sorrow from where he stood, and in spite of himself, sympathized with her. He knew her sorrow well, but in this war he was the victor, and his spirits had been lifted so high at the knowledge that he would soon be reunited with his love, and have their children in his arms, he could not feel sorrow for more than a second. He had much to do now, to prepare for their coming, and he quickly went to work, his heart soaring.

On Olympus, Zeus was both surprised and perplexed. First, he had not expected to see Hermes, disheveled and a bit abused on top of that. He had assured the king of the gods however that he was fine and nothing too terrible had befallen him in Hades' realm. The news he brought was even more surprising and something Zeus would have never guessed, which was that his brother and sister had come to a truce regarding Persephone.

That the truce involved Demeter returning Persephone permanently to Hades was even harder to believe, and Zeus wondered if Hades had not threatened her. But Hermes said that Demeter had gone to Hades on her own accord, and so he was unsure what to make of it all. How and why it occurred was much less important to him than the fact that the world below seemed to be going back to normal. Since Hermes returned, there had been no more earthquakes and the mortals were lifting up sacrifices and praise to the gods for what they believed was their prayers being answered.

As everything seemed to be settling back into place and order, Zeus decided not to worry about the questions of how and why it had happened. As Hermes had delivered the news, Hera had been sitting by his side and reached over to clasp his hand. Still holding his hand after Hermes was dismissed, she leaned over and said sweetly, "Well, it looks as if everything is finally back to normal by love."

Zeus smiled back as he squeezed her hand, never any the wiser.

Demeter made her way home slowly. Her heart was so heavy. She had just gotten her grandbabies and had to give them away just as quickly as they had come into the world. And Persephone. It felt just like yesterday that Persephone was an infant. Thinking back to that time, Demeter never would have imagined that she held the future Queen of the Underworld at her breast. Sighing, she saw her dwelling come into view. A little ways away however, Demeter saw Persephone out in surrounding meadow. Steeling herself, she walked towards her.

Persephone had taken the babies out in their basket and set it gently in the grass. She had lain down next to it, stretching out in the grass on her side. It was the closest she could get to Hades presently, and it would have to do. She laid her palm flat against the earth and closed her eyes, wishing she was beneath the ground with him. She could have taken a nap, but didn't allow herself to as she needed to mind her babies. She closed her eyes and felt longing and heartache overcome her, and just as she felt tears about to fill her eyes she heard her name.

Her eyes snapped open and she looked up to see her mother standing over her.

Demeter reached out her hands to her to help her up, which Persephone took. Standing up in front of her, she saw immediately that something was wrong with her mother.

"Mother, what is wrong? What has happened?" she asked, concerned.

Demeter stared back into her daughter's soft brown eyes and willed herself to say the words.

"I love you, I love you more than you can ever imagine. And that's why I am doing this."

Persephone feared her mother's words. What did she mean to do?

"Mother I—"

"You are going back to Hades tonight, for good." Demeter cut her off and Persephone's eyes went wide, her lips parting in silent disbelief.

Persephone's mind raced. How could that be possible? What had happened to make it so? It seemed far too good to be true, she could not yet believe it.

"But.....but....how?" was all she could say.

"I am giving you back to him." Demeter said. "It's where you and the babies belong." Demeter was losing the battle with her defiant tears that were welling in her eyes now.

Persephone felt her own tears spilling out of her eyes as she threw her arms around her mother's neck.

"Oh mother," she sobbed. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" she wept into Demeter's neck and Demeter wrapped her arms firmly around her daughter, holding her to her possessively, not knowing when she would get to hold her again.

Back in the Underworld, Hades was overseeing the rapid preparations from the return of his Queen and their offspring. Persephone's matching throne was being installed next to his, their bedchambers were being tidied, her many jewels were being polished, and a double crib was being prepared for their babes. Anything and everything Hades could think of was being seen to.

Hades was a nervous wreck, anxious for everything to be perfect for their arrival, and just anxious to have his goddesses safely returned to him. Well, two of them would be arriving for the very first time, and he was beside himself with want to finally see them. He was constantly reminding himself how much time was left before sunset, how much time did he

have to prepare and how much longer did he have to wait. Hecate was bustling about herself, but mostly trying to calm Hades.

When the time was finally drawing very near, she suggested to him, “My lord, perhaps you will want to... freshen up before you greet your wife and newborns?” she said cautiously.

Hades considered her words and remembered that he had been neglecting himself since he thought his love was lost forever. His beard needed trimming, his hair needed taming, he needed a bath and a fresh tunic as well. He had been so busy with preparing everything else he had neglected himself. Cursing, he hurried off to do that, hoping he would have enough time before they arrived to make himself presentable.

Charon ferried the most precious cargo of his Queen and her daughters slowly and carefully up the Styx, with Demeter in tow as well. Persephone was staring down into the basket, the newborns lulled to sleep by the gentle movements of the boat on the water. Demeter sat across from her, the basket in between them. She too looked at the precious sleeping babes adoringly, hoping she would see them again before they were fully grown.

Persephone could barely contain herself with excitement. She kept one eye on her babes and the other on the riverbank, waiting impatiently for the palace to come into view. She wondered if Hades would come down to meet her or if he would be waiting in the palace for them, unaware of when they might arrive. Her mother had said she must be returned by sundown, so she figured that Hades would expect them anytime and be waiting in his throne room. She hoped however that he would be standing on the riverbank when they arrived, ready to take her in his arms. Demeter noted her daughter’s anxiousness but pretended not to, instead trying to imprint in her mind the image of her perfect granddaughters.

Hades walked hastily towards the Styx, being clean and presentable now as well as rid of his armor. His heart was about to beat out of his chest. He was almost reunited with her. It would be but a few more moments. And then he would finally see their children, and all would be right in his world again. No, things would be better than they had ever been, in just a few minutes.

Hades’ timing was perfect, for as he came in sight of the Styx the ferry did as well. It was if it were all playing in slow motion before him. Her back was to him at first. The sun setting behind her as it had when he last saw her. As if feeling his eyes on her, she turned her head, her long dark waves softly moving aside to reveal her face. Her eyes were searching and her lips parted gently. She glowed in the sunset. It was like he was seeing her for the first time all over again. He felt his heart stop and she locked eyes with him.

The ferry gently bumped the bank, and still as if in slow motion, Persephone rose gracefully and quickly lifted her grey gown past her knees to swing her legs over the side and hop onto the bank. She landed softly and sprinted towards him, but still it was slow in his mind. He stood still for a moment, watching her and making sure she was real, that this was really happening. Then, as she was halfway to him, he began to walk quickly towards her.

Her hair was bouncing around her and her hands holding up her gown to let her legs hastily take her to him. Her full lips were spread in a large smile and her eyes glittered at him. He stretched out his arms she was immediately encompassed by him, her arms circling his neck and her face pressed against his. He clutched her tightly and closed his eyes. He had no words. He did not even attempt to speak. He could only stand there and breathe her in, reveling in her.

She sighed into his neck, pressing her face into his hair and crying silently. Hades let one hand slide down to press into her back just above her bottom and the other was pressed in between her shoulder blades.

“Hades,” she sighed and he tightened his grip on her even more in response. He could not yet find his voice. His lips were pressed into her neck and his chest was rising and falling rapidly. He kissed her neck and trailed more kisses down to her bare shoulder. Demeter looked away, pretending not to see. It did give her some comfort to see him so undone though, to see how much he loved her.

Persephone pulled away from him to look into his eyes. They were red like hers, tears staining both their faces. She brought both hands to take his bearded cheeks and bring his lips to hers. He consumed her in a smoldering kiss and she melted into him. They broke the kiss only to consume each other with an even deeper one and Hades began to grab at her, but Persephone remembered where they were and stopped him. Pulling back, she smiled up at him happily and turned back to her mother. He didn’t want to let her go but then too remembered the babies, and reluctantly released his hold on her.

Persephone ran back to her mother who had gotten out of the ferry with the basket. She threw her arms around Demeter’s neck and hugged her tight. “I love you, mother. The babies and I will see you again, soon. I promise.”

Demeter held her daughter tight and didn’t want to let go. She looked past her and saw Hades looking back at her. He surprised her by nodding ever so slightly, with a much gentler expression on his face than he had given her in eons. Demeter smiled weakly back at him, then let go of her daughter.

Persephone took the basket from her mother and turned to walk back to Hades. He walked towards her quickly to take the basket, as it was too large and bulky for Persephone to bear.

Taking it from her effortlessly with one hand he looked down to behold its contents.

The sight of his two perfect little ones took his breath away. Their eyes were closed as they slept peacefully, one slightly larger than the other. He looked back to Persephone with a mixture of awe and delight.

“Aren’t they perfect darling?” Persephone gushed. “Do you not love them already?”

Hades smiled warmly at her, “They are, my love. They absolutely are.” He replied.

Hades was anxious to have them all back in his chambers, and he took his wife with his free hand and started towards the palace. Demeter watched them as they went, Persephone wrapped around his free arm and leaning over him to look at the babies. She began to recant every single thing they had done since they were born. Hades was looking from the basket to his wife and back again, the rest of the world having fell away as far as he was concerned.

Demeter blinked back more tears. As she turned back to Charon and the ferry to make her way home, she thought to herself. *If the lord of the Underworld can fall so completely for the goddess of flowers, perhaps I shall love again too.*

Finally settled into their chambers, Hades sat next to Persephone on their bed as she gently lifted one of the babes from the basket. Proudly, she presented her to Hades.

“This is your firstborn my love,” Persephone continued to gush.

Hades took the babe, which began to wiggle and wake in his arms. Slowly, its little eyes opened and looked directly up into his. Hades felt his heart constrict. He was staring back into his own light blue eyes. She was so perfect, she looked nothing like him other than her eyes. She favored her mother, which Hades was happy for.

“What is her name, my darling?” Persephone asked.

Hades looked to her with surprise. “You have not named them?” he asked.

“Without you? How could I?” Persephone asked with her own surprise at him.

Hades smiled adoringly at her, then looked down at the baby in his arms. He thought for a moment.

“Macaria.”

“Macaria,” Persephone repeated sweetly, stroking the top of their baby’s head.

Hades smiled at his firstborn with as much pride as Persephone felt. She still seemed tired and blinked once or twice before seeming to doze again, so Hades stood to lay her gently in the ebony crib that sat so closely to Persephone’s side of the bed.

“I see you knew that I would not have them in a nursery.” Persephone observed.

“No, no I could not imagine you having them any further from you than this at all times.” Hades replied.

“And what when they wake you during the night with their crying?” Persephone grinned at him.

“Then, I will walk them about until you feed them both or until they fall asleep again.” He said seriously and Persephone felt her heart melt inside of her. He had said it like it was the most obvious thing in the world that he would rise to care for his little ones, and it made Persephone happier than she could tell him.

As he sat back down with her, she picked up the other baby to present to him. He took her to hold against his chest but the baby did not wake. She was still soundly asleep and while Hades wished she was awake he would not dare rouse her. She was a little larger than her sister but looked largely the same.

“They are not identical, I can most certainly tell the difference between them. Though, she has your eyes just as Macaria does.” Persephone delightedly told him.

“Yes, I can see the difference too.....let’s call her Melinoe.” He suggested.

“Melinoe.” Persephone repeated and kissed her husband on the cheek in approval. He smiled and as before, took the baby to lay her next to her sister. Persephone had followed him to the crib, so they both stood and regarded their perfect, sleeping goddesses. Persephone took Hades’ hand and intertwined her fingers with his. They looked to each other then and Hades leaned his forehead against hers.

“My darling love,” Persephone said. “Thank you.”

“For what, my sweet?” he asked.

“For our little ones of course.”

“I should have been there... you should not have had to bear that alone....” Hades trailed off, regret in his voice now.

“Hades, there is no way we could have known. That is not your fault. I am the one that wanted it anyway.” She tried to soothe him.

“I did want them, it was just more complicated at the time.....but none of that matters now. Everything is as it should be.” Hades assured her.

Persephone smiled, “Yes, finally.”

Hades seemed to have something come over him then, and he began to pull her towards the bed. She followed him, but noticed the look on his face. She tugged off her sandals quickly and began to push off her dress, but Hades stopped her.

“Not yet my love, I just want to hold you for a while.” He said with hurt in his voice.

Persephone did not understand. “Hades, what is the matter?”

He sat on the bed and pulled her to him. “I....I thought, that night after you and I laid together, that you....you were dead.”

Persephone was shocked. She couldn’t understand why he should have thought so. “But....darling why?”

“You called to me, I heard you, saw you in my dreams. You were in pain, and when I came to find you, you were gone. There were only fields of flowers where you had been, along with your blood and very essence... what was I to think?” His voice breaking as he asked.

Persephone took that in. She had had no idea. It made sense, but no one had told her. It was likely that no one even knew. Her heart broke as she thought about his despair, the gut wrenching loss she knew she would feel if the reverse had happened to her. She had thought his anger and assault on the world was in response to being denied her and the babies.

“Oh, Hades.....” Persephone began to cry and took his face in her hands. “I called your name before I passed out....I tried not to so as not to alarm you but the pain was so great I—”

“Do not apologize my love, it is not your fault.” Hades stopped her. “You are here now, and nothing will ever take you from me again.” He said having wrapped his arms around her possessively.

Persephone wiped her tears. “But Hades... mother said you agreed to let me see her from time to time....did you not?”

Hades made a face. “Yes....but I put no exact parameters on it. You can see her for a few hours every year...”

“A few hours every year?! My love.....perhaps a little more often than that....” Persephone coaxed him.

Hades made another face, a frustrated one, and Persephone decided to argue about it later.

“Let’s talk of it later darling....I am sorry. You wanted to hold your wife I believe?” Persephone asked sweetly, determined to change the conversation now.

Hades forced her to lie down and then lay on top of her, his head on her breasts. She wrapped her arms around him and held him to her, running her fingers through his hair and over his scalp gently. She felt his breathing become steady and knew he was falling asleep, he was emotionally exhausted but still clutching her possessively. Persephone smiled into the darkness. Her lord was at her breast and their babies were next to them in their crib, also sleeping silently. Persephone was the happiest she had ever been, and soon she too was sleeping peacefully.

Sometime later, how long she knew not, Persephone woke to realize Hades was not atop her anymore. Rising, she saw him checking on their little ones, who still sleeping quietly. She also noticed the fire was roaring again. He must have renewed it. Persephone herself had barely adjusted to the cold of the Underworld when she left, but the babes would likely be very cold indeed.

Other than the firelight, Hades had doused the many candles that typically lit the room and it was dark and comfortably warm now. She could only really see Hades’ outline as he leaned over the crib, and he sensed her looking at him and turned to face her.

She watched his figure coming back to bed, and she quickly slipped out of her gown and deposited it on the floor beside the bed. In turn, she saw her husband’s form pull the tunic over his head and drop it to the floor too. Slowly, he climbed onto the bed to position himself over her.

She could barely make out any of his features, they were shrouded in darkness with the fire behind him. She felt a large, strong hand caress her face and slide down to stroke her neck and then her belly, stopping before it touched her most intimate parts. Persephone sighed into the darkness. Hades dipped his head to take a nipple in his mouth and Persephone arched her back. He sucked gently, then rolled his tongue over and around her bud, again and again until Persephone let a moan escape her lips. Immediately remembering her sleeping babies, she clamped her mouth shut and vowed to remain silent, no matter how much pure ecstasy her husband put her in.

Hades had moved to her other nipple and Persephone swallowed her moans this time. Her breathing was hard and she sunk her nails into this back. He moved down from her breasts to plant wet, soft, and languid kisses into her belly, which he noted was as flat as it had ever been. His mouth found her nether lips then and Persephone braced herself for an eruption of pleasure. She parted her legs for him and waited patiently for her lord to taste her. Instead of a tongue, she felt a thick finger slip into her. Hades noted that she was as tight as when he first took her, and smiled into the darkness.

Persephone then felt his tongue slowly lick her, and she pressed her head back into the pillows, eyes shut tight.

Hades slowly devoured her, his head pressed firmly between his wife's legs. One of her hands gripped the back of his neck and hair, the other gripped the sheets beside her.

Waves of pleasure rolled through Persephone's body and just before she felt she would come, Hades rose up and wiped his face and beard on the inside of her thigh. Crawling up to sit on her hips, Persephone reached out in the dark for him. He leaned down and tucked his arm under her neck to hold her and she reached down to bring his tip to her entrance.

He pushed forward and felt his wife's tight, wet folds close around him, pleasure shooting through him as he did. Slowly and steadily, he claimed his wife as completely as he ever had. She felt so perfect for him, so made for him, that she was practically an extension of his own body. He felt hollow and incomplete when she wasn't near. And when they coupled, as they did now, it was beyond anything he could ever hope to articulate.

As he slowly and passionately made love to her, Hades reached down to toy with her clit. He felt her trying to force herself to be silent, the tension in her body betraying her. Her breathing was rapid and he knew she was close. He had to feel her come before he did. Increasing the speed of which he took her and pressing harder into her clit, he finally felt her channel vibrate and her body go rigid. Her mouth was open in a silent scream and Hades sucked at her bottom lip as he finished, his orgasm claiming him as hers subsided.

He felt her relax into the bed. He slipped gently out of her and laid on his side next to her. He draped a powerful thigh over her legs and his arm was still under her neck. She angled towards him a bit and took his hand to lace her fingers with his. She brought it to her lips to press a soft and reverent kiss on the back and then laid it over her heart.

"My love," she whispered.

"My heart and soul," he whispered back.

Persephone smiled and closed her eyes. They both quickly fell asleep again, their babies having happily slept through everything.

AN: Reunited at last! Only two more happy and fluff filled chapters to go. :)

21. Family Life

A month had passed since Persephone had returned to the Underworld with their daughters. The Upperworld had settled down and finally gone back to normal, but the mortals would never forget the events that caused the earth so much turmoil. The abduction of Persephone by the dark and dreadful lord of the dead would be immortalized in myth and passed down through the centuries, however inaccurate the story was. Hades and Persephone did not mind this however. There had never been a love like theirs and never would be again. It did not matter to them who knew it or not. Few would understand a love like theirs anyway.

Persephone, after the birth of her daughters and the promise to return and aid her mother in bringing about the springtime every year, began to be seen by many as a fertility goddess, synonymous with life and life giving power. This suited her, for while she loved her husband's realm, she was a child of life and open fields, and she did not see herself as being done with bringing forth children either.

That would have to wait though, as she had two perfect little goddesses to devote herself to presently. She and Hades had centuries to have more babies. Although.....Persephone felt that she would want another baby to cuddle at her breast as soon as her goddesses could walk. She playfully mentioned that to Hades one day to see his face contort in disbelief as he was in the middle of trying to soothe one of their fussing babies in the middle of night as it awaited her turn at her mother's breast. Persephone would give it a few years she supposed.

As for the babies, Persephone noted that Hecate had been right about their requiring so much attention that they would take her from Hades a bit, a fact that Hades had most certainly noticed. He counseled himself not to get upset or jealous of his little ones, who he loved above all things save their mother, but it was difficult for him sometimes. He had convinced Persephone to let Hecate watch over the babes from time to time so that they could go about the palace just the two of them, but Persephone's mind was never far from their daughters. This was generally no matter to him, but he was used to having all of his wife's attention. He wanted her by his side every minute of the day after what had happened only a few short weeks ago, and so he insisted that she be with him as much as possible.

This included being seated beside him while he oversaw judgments. Now that her ebony throne was complete and next to his, Persephone could finally sit beside him while he performed that duty, and so finally learn to do so herself as Hades had promised.

This evening, Persephone sat next to her lord on their matching thrones, the crown of sapphires Hades had fashioned for her atop of her head. She wore a long, lush black gown that made her look as regal as any queen to have ever graced any empire of the world below. Hades, had been denied his wife that morning thanks to having risen late and Macaria and Melinoe both being uncharacteristically fussy. Persephone had had no interest in anything but calming them and so he had gone about his day.

As such, Hades could now barely keep his eyes from his wife. While mortal souls made pleas and orations before him, he cast his eyes sideways to steal glances at his beautiful wife, who was rapt with attention at what was going on before her and did not seem to notice his

gaze. She was intent on being a good student, eager to feel more useful in her new home. Perhaps he should let her go home a little more often than a few hours every year, Hades thought. Growing things and helping her mother usher in the springtime would lift her spirits for sure. He then considered that the real question was what powers would their daughters have. He thought on that from time to time, as their personalities were beginning to show only after a month of life. Perhaps they would need to spend a *little* time in the world above as they grew to cultivate their powers if they inherited any from their mother...

Hades lost that thought as he kept trying to catch his love's eye now without being obvious to the souls before him, and she was making that quite difficult. He wanted so badly to reach out and touch her, but remembered himself and his stoic exterior. He didn't necessarily want the entire cosmos to know that he was a weak kneed mess when it came to his wife. He did have a reputation to keep up.

Turning his attention back to the soul in front of him, a man not of great age when he passed, he noticed that his eyes too had been fixed on his queen and shifted quickly to meet Hades' gaze. Hades narrowed his eyes angrily at the soul which found that it was afraid even in death, but before Hades could say anything Persephone's hand found his. She had gracefully extended her hand to take his and hold it modestly, not moving a muscle in the rest of her body, still up right and as regal as ever.

Hades looked to her hand for a split second and immediately felt her touch calm him. He said nothing, but looked back to the soul and allowed it to continue its plea. Many souls followed that one, being judged by the dark lord as his bright and beautiful wife held his hand from her throne. Many of the souls who came before them paused a moment to regard her beauty and majesty, in awe of the Queen of the Underworld and understanding well why Hades had stolen her from the world above. Hades continued to steal glances at his love as the evening went on, until finally Persephone rose to excuse herself.

Time to tend to the babies, Hades knew. He sighed but enjoyed the view of his perfect mate walking away from him. He would join her soon in their chambers. Hopefully, the babies would be more agreeable tonight.

Sometime later thanks to the number of souls that evening, Hades was striding towards their bed chamber, frustrated and eager to be wrapped in his wife's embrace. It was not as though he hadn't had her countless times in the month that she had been returned to him. But he could not be satisfied where she was concerned.

As Hades opened their door and walked through the antechamber, his heart warmed at the sight that greeted him. Persephone sat propped against the headboard of their giant bed, Melinoe at her breast and Macaria lying next to her. Persephone supported Melinoe with one arm, which was becoming harder to do as the babies grew and she remained the bigger of the two, and her other hand was stroking and tickling Macaria's belly who was laughing and cooing loudly at her mother.

Hades shook his head. It was as though Persephone feared one babe would receive a seconds more attention than the other. If she had a favorite, he could not tell.

As he approached, Persephone heard him and looked up to smile at him warmly.

"Hello my lord husband. Come to see your goddesses?" she said sweetly.

He smiled just as warmly back at her. "You know I can't bear to be away too long." He said, sitting down on the bed next to her. He gently picked up Macaria and held her up to look at her, she instantly smiling at her father and reaching out her little hands towards his face. He brought her closer and she grabbed hold of his beard to tug at it, which he indulgently allowed.

"You have been judging all this time my love? You are later than I would have expected." Persephone mused.

"Yes, there is apparently a great war going on in Troy at the moment. Souls are pouring in from it, and practically all the Olympians are involved. The Fates are saying it will last for years." Hades replied.

"A war that long? Over what?" Persephone inquired.

Hades smirked at her. "What else? A woman."

Persephone narrowed her eyes at him in mock offense, then looked back to Melinoe as she continued to feed her. The babe was sucking at her mother ardently with one little hand laid against her breast for support. Hades watched her, chuckling, "She is very hungry tonight."

"They are both more and more hungry. Look how greedily she grabs at my breast? Just like her father...." Persephone said the last part a bit lower.

Hades raised his eyebrows and pretended to be indignant. "Excuse me wife, but I do believe I have patiently waited my turn all these nights since you are returned. In fact, I am surviving on very little attention at the moment..." he replied, not joking about the last part.

"Ohhhh darling," Persephone purred at him. "Have I been neglecting you?" she said sweetly and Hades could not tell if it was a serious question.

He looked back to Macaria who was still playing with his beard and giggling at the feel of it. "Perhaps.....a little bit.....yes."

Persephone pouted at him and looked back to Melinoe. "Hurry my little love, your father wants his turn at my breast."

Hades huffed, exasperated. "You are terrible." He said to her but she just laughed.

About another minute passed and Melinoe was sated. Standing up, Persephone carried the satisfied and now sleepy baby over to its crib. After laying her down gently, she turned to walk over to Hades and retrieve Macaria from him to lay her next to her sister. Melinoe was already drifting off and Macaria yawned preciously, and Persephone took a moment to simply stare in loving devotion at her daughters.

She was interrupted by the Hades clearing his throat behind her. She turned to look at him, sitting on the edge of the bed looking at her expectantly.

Walking over to him, she stepped in between his legs and wrapped her arms around his neck. "What a bad wife I have been to my lord as of late. Neglecting him so..." She purred and ran her hands through his dark curls and down over his chest. He pulled her to him, hands trailing down her back and over her bottom, grasping it through the thin material of her gown.

"How are you going to make it up to me then, wife?" he purred back at her.

Persephone smiled wickedly. She tugged at his tunic and he lifted his arms so she could pull it over his head. Depositing it on the floor, she drank in his naked form. He reached for her but she stepped backwards out of his grasp from where he sat on the bedside.

She unclasped her gown so that it fell to pool around her feet and it was Hades' turn to bask in his love's gorgeous form. She did a little turn for him so that he might admire her completely, then slowly stepped back into reach but quickly sank to her knees between Hades' legs. Running her hands over his muscular thighs, her fingertips grazed his manhood as they neared it, teasing him.

His member was hardening and she leaned forward, painfully slow, licking her lips and parting them as they neared their target. Gently, her lips made contact with his tip, and she lightly kissed it. She felt Hades shift, growing restless and impatient. She smiled against him.

Bringing her hands around to grasp his thighs, she plunged forward taking his entirety in her mouth at once. She heard him groan and felt him buck in response. He was fully aroused now and she began to suck furiously at him. His hands found her shoulders and his dull nails dug into her skin, so deep she wondered would they leave marks.

She continued her assault on him and felt him threatening to come undone as a result of her ministrations. Before he did though, he suddenly pulled away from her, leaving her to almost fall backwards, teetering on her heels.

She pouted up at him and he looked down at her with a heaving chest and dilated pupils.

"I've been denied you too long to last like that," he rasped.

Persephone smirked. He had just had her last night! But then he was used to having her first thing in the morning and sometimes during the day as well, but the babies had cut into that.

"Get up here," he commanded lowly and Persephone sprung up on her heels to mount him where he sat. Bringing her knees around him on the bed to straddle him, she was about to lower herself onto him when he inserted a thick finger into her folds.

She gasped and tilted her head back at the sensation, being wet with anticipation and the sight of her pleased husband.

"Mmmmm..." Hades voice came. "You are as tight as when I first took you," he said.

"One of the benefits of being an immortal goddess," she replied, referencing the fact that she had completely returned to her former self almost immediately after giving birth to their babies. He having not witnessed her brief pregnancy had only ever seen her as she was now.

He smiled at her and withdrew his finger, allowing her to lift herself and lower onto his member, it sinking to the hilt inside of her. Persephone instantly felt him throbbing against her walls and pushed herself up to support herself with her hands on his shoulders. With her knees digging in the bed on either side of him and using her hands to brace herself, Persephone began to rapidly bring herself up and down, up and down, up and down on Hades' pulsing organ. He cupped her cheeks with his large, rough hands and helped guide her motions, though he mostly sat there and let his wife claim him.

Persephone rode Hades like mad, withdrawing from him almost completely to slam back down onto him, over and over again. As always, Persephone tried to force herself to be silent despite her ecstasy, but sometimes the body numbing pleasure her lord put her in made it impossible. She was panting and grunting softly, which Hades loved to hear. He missed his wife's cries of sheer bliss and secretly tried to break her resolve by overwhelming her with pleasure. Presently, her large breasts were practically slapping him in the face as she rode him and he wanted her much to grab one in his mouth. They were tempting him, those taut pink buds, and he wanted one between his lips desperately.

Just as Persephone was nearing the build of her climax and final release, Hades in one swift and fluid motion, grasped his wife by the waist, stood up, turned around and deposited her on her back. Before Persephone knew what was happening Hades was on top of her, her knees on either side of her head as Hades pushed her legs up with his shoulders to hover over her. They had never disconnected through all of that and Persephone couldn't stop herself crying out from the shock of it and how deep the position drove him into her.

After pounding her savagely a few times that way, Hades withdrew to pull back and roughly take a nipple in his mouth. He tugged at it for a few seconds then moved to do the same to the other. Persephone gasped and moaned freely now, forgetting everything but the moment.

Hades pulled back to sit on his knees then and inserted his thumb to trace firm circles on her clit, making her cry out again. He continued this as he resumed pumping in and out of her, until the dual pleasure quickly built to give her her release.

Persephone cried out towards the ornate ceiling of their bedchamber and as she began to ride out her orgasm felt her husband burst inside of her. She had no time to lie and recover however, for as her screams died they were joined by those of a startled baby.

"Melinoe!" Persephone exclaimed and quickly moved from under her husband to hurry to the crib.

Hades rolled off of her and onto his back. "You can tell the difference in their cries?" he asked incredulously. It was a mother thing, he supposed.

"Of course I can, you mean you cannot?" Persephone asked just as surprised as she went to grab Melinoe but then stopped herself. Melinoe's cries were beginning to wake Macaria who would be fussy too if her sister was upset, so she grabbed her first and turned to quickly carry her to bed. She deposited the baby on Hades' bare chest where he lay settled into his side of the bed, then practically ran back to the crib to fetch her upset little Melinoe. Persephone inwardly cursed herself for allowing her cries to frighten her baby from its sleep.

Hades seemed to read her thoughts and spoke, "She is fine darling." He was now soothing Macaria by rubbing her back gently as she laid face down on his hard and flat chest. Persephone slipped back into bed with Melinoe, rocking her and calming her startled babe. Melinoe calmed considerably in her mother's grasp and both babies seemed to be settling back down. Hades extended his arm for Persephone to slide under so that she rested in his embrace, Melinoe cradled in her arms and Macaria cradled on his chest. Persephone made herself comfortable, her head resting against Hades', and suddenly felt very sleepy.

Hades saw her eyelids growing heavier and their daughters following suit, having the perfect view of all three of them in his arms. He angled his head to give Persephone a gentle kiss on her forehead and saw her smile weakly as she was indeed dozing off. She had been up since very early with the babies and now after that vigorous love making was extremely tired.

“I love you.....” she barely managed to whisper as her eyes fluttered close. Hades looked down at the three sleeping and happy goddesses in his embrace. Each of them had his heart in a vice grip that he knew would never loosen. And he didn’t want it to. The entire world above and beyond could fall to ruin, for his entire world lay there securely in his arms.

AN: There you go. Just a fluffy epilogue to end their story. Thank you to everyone who stuck with it and reviewed very week, I really appreciate the support and feedback on my first story. I hope it brought you some pleasure in reading it as it did me in writing it.

22. Epilogue

Five years had passed since the birth of Macaria and Melinoe, and there were no two gods happier than Hades and Persephone. They had everything. Well....almost everything.

The sun was going to rise soon in the world of the living as Hades and Persephone emerged from the Underworld. She was giddy with excitement as she tugged her lord along by the hand. Coming to the spot where they had met in secret so many nights before they were lord and lady, Persephone let go of Hades' hand and laid down on the soft grass. Stretching her arms out towards her husband, he joined her, leaning down to gently push her legs apart and slowly push her gown up over her hips. Persephone tugged at him and he came to rest between her legs, one hand on either side of her head in the grass. She adjusted his tunic and wrapped her legs around his waist, grabbed his member and bringing it to her entrance.

Hades thrust forwardly gently and was enveloped by his love, her head tilting back into the grass and her eyes closing in pleasure. Hades dipped his head to let it rest alongside hers as he smoothly fucked her, slipping in and out effortlessly thanks to her slickness for him. Persephone's lips were parted in silent ecstasy and Hades grunted softly as he claimed his queen. Before long, they both reached their peak and came down again to lie breathlessly in each other's arms. Persephone noted the same unsettled feeling she had the last time they made love in the Upperworld and smiled to herself.

When he regained his composure, Hades stood and gently picked up his wife to hold her to him bridal style, one arm under her knees and the other behind her shoulders. He smiled to himself now, remembering this was how he had taken her to the Underworld the very first time. She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned against him, ready to go home.

A short while later, Persephone lay propped up in their bed with Hades beside her, one of his hands gripping hers and the other on her large, pregnant belly. He had sat by her side as she swelled, his hands caressing and calming her the entire time. He had been alarmed at first, but Persephone reassured him. While the pain was horrible, Persephone was not afraid as last time. She knew she would survive it and she had Hades beside her. He was whispering sweet words of praise and encouragement into her ear as she pushed and braced herself against the pain. He hated to see her in such pain, he wanted so much to take it from her. Wailing and panting, Persephone tried with all her might. It would be over soon, soon she would have their baby in her arms, she repeated to herself. Squeezing her eyes shut and crying out, she felt Hades move from her side.

A moment later, she heard the cries. Flinging her eyes open, she saw Hades holding up a perfect little miniature of himself. A not so tiny baby boy. As with their daughters, Hades' blue eyes stared back at her as the infant wailed and kicked in his father's hands. Unlike his sisters, the baby bore no resemblance at all to Persephone. He was all Hades, from the tuft of pitch black hair to his perfect Greek nose.

Persephone thrust out her arms for him and Hades quickly laid the babe on her chest. Persephone clutched him to her breast, forgetting all her pain, and showered his little head

with soft kisses. As she cradled him, laughing and crying, Hades in turn cradled her in his arms. She looked up at him and saw his eyes watered as he stared in awe of his newborn son. The babe began to quiet its cries, being calmed by the embrace of its mother, and Hades lightly kissed the top of his head before capturing Persephone's lips in a deep and passionate kiss.

As they broke apart and looked back to their newborn, Persephone giggled and mused, "He looks as though I had nothing to do with him. He is all yours my love."

Hades smiled warmly. "What is his name my dear?"

Persephone looked at the baby nestled into her chest. "Zagreus." She said. Hades repeated it as he stuck a finger into its little palm, which the baby immediately wrapped his fingers around to grip.

"Zagreus..." Persephone whispered to the baby and swore she saw him smile at her.

A few hours later, Hades was walking towards their bedchamber with each of his hands being held by a bouncing little goddess. Macaria and Melinoe were each gripping their father's hands and trying to keep up with him, their little legs no match for the large strides their father made. Both were excited about the surprise he had told them of and curious as to where their mother had been all day.

"Is it a pony, father?" Macaria asked looking up at him.

Hades' chuckled. "In mother and father's bedchamber my love?"

"We already have a pony..." Melinoe piped in.

Hades just smiled. They would never guess what was waiting for them.

As they reached their destination he swung open the large brass doors and let his little ones enter before he followed.

They ran through the antechamber and into the bedroom, calling for the mother the whole way. Persephone looked up from where she lay on the bed, a clean grey gown on now and a bundle in her arms.

She smiled as she watched her daughters happily bounding towards her. With the exception of their blue eyes, they looked just like her. Long, dark brown waves, full lips, rosy cheeks and skin darker than their father's. They hopped effortlessly onto the great bed and crawled towards their mother, excited and curious at what lay in Persephone's arms.

"Mama!" Macaria exclaimed. "Where have you been all day? We have been with lady Hecate since we woke."

"And have you been good?" Persephone asked smiling.

"Yes, mama!" Melinoe answered enthusiastically.

"Mama! What's that?" Macaria asked as she came to sit next to Persephone.

Hades had made his way to the bed and sat next to Persephone now.

“This, my little loves, is your brother.” He answered her.

“A brother?! But where did he come from?” Melinoe asked.

Hades had not expected that question and faltered, knitting his brow and looking to Persephone to save him. Persephone smiled and took the question.

“Your lord father and I created him out of our love for each other darling.” She said smoothing Melinoe’s hair with the hand that was not holding Zagreus to her chest.

“You mean you grew him mama, the way you grow flowers?” Macaria chimed in.

Persephone couldn’t suppress a laugh. “Yes darling, it is not unlike that. Father and I grew him, as we grew the both of you.”

That answer seemed to suffice for the girls and they turned their full attention to their baby brother.

“He looks like father,” Melinoe observed and Hades pulled her into his arms to kiss her on the back of the head.

“Can we take him to see grandmother?” Macaria asked excitedly.

“Yes, darling. Soon.” Persephone answered, knowing Demeter would be shocked to say the least at discovering she had another grandchild, but would dote on him as she did on her granddaughters. Hades had softened more than even Persephone had imagined, letting the girls visit Demeter and the Upperworld several times a year. It also helped that he could deny his little ones nothing, so when they begged to see their grandmother it did not take him long to cave to their request.

Persephone drew Macaria to her with her free arm. Both girls leaned over their mother to study their new brother, and as they sweetly regarded him, Persephone and Hades regarded each other. They smiled at each other, each silently acknowledging their love and how they had everything they had ever wanted, whether they had known they’d wanted it or not. Hades leaned forward to rest his head against hers and they looked down at their children. The two happiest and most faithful gods in existence, then and forever after.

AN: Short, but the happy ending I promised. Thanks again to all who reviewed and stuck with it. I appreciate you!